TAKE ME WITH YOU.

SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 599. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 23RD, 1900. [ONE PENNY.

How Indigestion Becomes Chronic.

Many people neglect attention to their Digestive Functions until they find them inflicting Pain and Discomfort, and then resort is had to drugs that in the end make matters chronic and more troublesome, simply because the action of such drugs is contrary to the acts and methods of Nature.

But if Guy's Tonic is resorted to, either to prevent or to cure any disorder of Digestion or Assimilation, then great Benefit invariably results, because the lines of cure and restoration followed are the same as the paths of Nature herself. Hence Guy's Tonic always does good, and commences to do it quickly.

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Mr. A. G. WELHAM, of Union Street, Aldershot, writes:

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"I have derived much Benefit from the use of four "bottles of Guy's Tonic after suffering from Nervous "Dyspepsia for over twelve months. Needless to say, if I "have a recurrence of the trouble I shall fly to your "valuable Tonic again."

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SHORT STORIES

No. 599.] [PRICE ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending June 23rd, 1900.

OLD MEEK.

WE always called him Meek Adams, but that was not his name, of course. He was christened John Adams, and on his bill heads he was set down as J. Adams, which was his usual signature. But it certainly never entered into the head of any inhabitant of our village to call him anything but Meek Adams, and even that was usually turned into "Old Meek."

He was not a native of the village; people said that he had settled in Winsted many years ago and had bought the good-will of the general shop in the "Street," and that was all they knew about him. He was a man of some refinement and had always been most anxious to oblige his neighbours and friends; in course of time he had carried this desire to please and to assist to such a point that it seemed almost incredible that he could ever muster up courage enough to refuse. He grew really timid, and it was this characteristic which finally earned for him the nickname of "Meek."

Meek's shop was of somewhat peculiar construction, and at the back there were two parlours instead of the usual one; the smaller was his own private apartment, but the larger had gradually come to be used as a general room for visitors, and the men of the village often took advantage of the accommodation.

What made Meek turn his larger parlour into a social room for the village it was not easy to understand; all we could say was that he was a peculiar old man and that this was one of his peculiarities.

One thing that puzzled us about the old man was that although he unquestionably did a thriving business, he always seemed to be short of money. Not that he ever kept people waiting for payment of their bills, except on very rare occasions, but many little things proved to us that he had no spare cash.

The other tradesmen of the place had banking accounts at a neighbouring town, but when Meek had to send payment to a distant merchant he had to purchase a money order. And he never kept up any appearance, as other people would have done; he was always neat in dress, but there was no disguising the fact that his clothes were usually threadbare and that new suits were for him something like angel's visits—few and far between.

What did Old Meek do with his money? Did he invest his profits—in short, was he a miser? That

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seemed the most probable explanation of his impecuniosity, yet we had to admit that it was decidedly not in accordance with the old man's willingness to assist others. For his assistance was not limited to small acts of kindness which cost nothing, but was often of the most practical kind. Many and many a time we had known him to give money or food from his shop to the poorer people of the community, and whenever there was a Sunday school treat, the organisers could depend upon receiving donations of bread, butter, cake and jam from the shop of John Adams.

Some of us knew for a fact that he had lent money to people in difficulties, but to such a pitch had grown his fear of offending people and seeming to be disobliging, that he never asked for the money if the borrowers suffered from lapses of memory. What, then, became of the money?

"Could you lend me ten pounds for about a fortnight?"

One of the most prominent personages in our little community was Jim Hendy; he was prominent by reason of his disagreeable, rather than by his agreeable, qualities.

He was a man about thirty; his father—about whom the less said the better—had died when Jim was five years old, and his mother — the very antithesis of her husband—had died two years later. The boy had been sent to school and had received a fair education by means of money left at his mother's death; and when he was taken from school and apprenticed to the village carpenter, it was on the understanding that he would in due course become a partner or buy up the business. The latter contingency had occurred.

But Jim Hendy was hardly the man to make a successful business of carpentering, or, indeed, of any other trade. He could not be depended upon to complete a job within the specified time, and if he had not lost his connection it was by good luck rather than by good management.

He spent his money as fast as it came to him, and when he had to provide materials he found it necessary either to ask for a sum on account or to borrow.

The inhabitants of Winsted shook their heads over Jim Hendy; he spent more than he earned, and it was currently rumoured that Old Meek had financed him more than once.

But that was only rumour, for no one could say anything definite about it.

Colour was, however, lent to the statement by the fact that Old Meek seemed to have an especial liking for Jim Hendy.

This was certainly a peculiar feature in the old man's character; he was upright and respectable in the extreme, which remark could not be applied to Hendy, and it was a matter of surprise to all of us that the old man should show such partiality for a man who at times came near to deserving the title of reprobate.

One day we received an explanation of the fact of Jim spending more than we believed it possible for him to earn; he announced that he intended to go to a solicitor in the market town and see if it where possible to realise the securities purchased by the money left by his mother, the dividends of which he received at certain intervals.

He went, but when he returned he was very sullen and said that he could get nothing out of the lawyer — that the money was tied up in such a way that he could only receive a certain amount each quarter. The only concession that he could obtain was a promise to inquire whether the payments could be made monthly, and later on he received an intimation that this would be done.

"I suppose your mother had some money in her own right," said Mr. Rigsby, the harness maker, to Jim Hendy, for I know that your father hadn't any to leave."

"I suppose so," replied Hendy gruffly, not appreciating the words of his neighbour. "Her father had money, so I believe, but he wouldn't have anything to do with her after her marriage."

One summer evening Old Meek went to his neighbour Rigsby and, after a few general remarks uttered in his usual timid manner, drew quite close to the harness maker and said:

"Could you lend me ten pounds for about a fortnight, Mr. Rigsby? I have a bill to pay to-morrow, and I have only one pound of the money."

Rigsby was a kind-hearted man, but this gave him the opening for which he and many of the people of Winsted had been waiting—it gave him the opportunity to touch upon the question of what Meek did with his money.

Rigsby could not resist the temptation.

"Now, Meek, how is it that you haven't enough to meet that bill? I don't want to know your business, but it seems strange that you shouldn't have a few pounds by you when you have been doing a good business all these years. I'll lend you the money, but——"

"I have calls upon my purse which nobody knows about," replied Old Meek hesitatingly, when he had recovered from the surprise occasioned by the question.

"I'll pay you back before a fortnight, perhaps," he continued, growing again confused.

"You see, it's—that is—I mean I had to lend some myself, Rigsby."

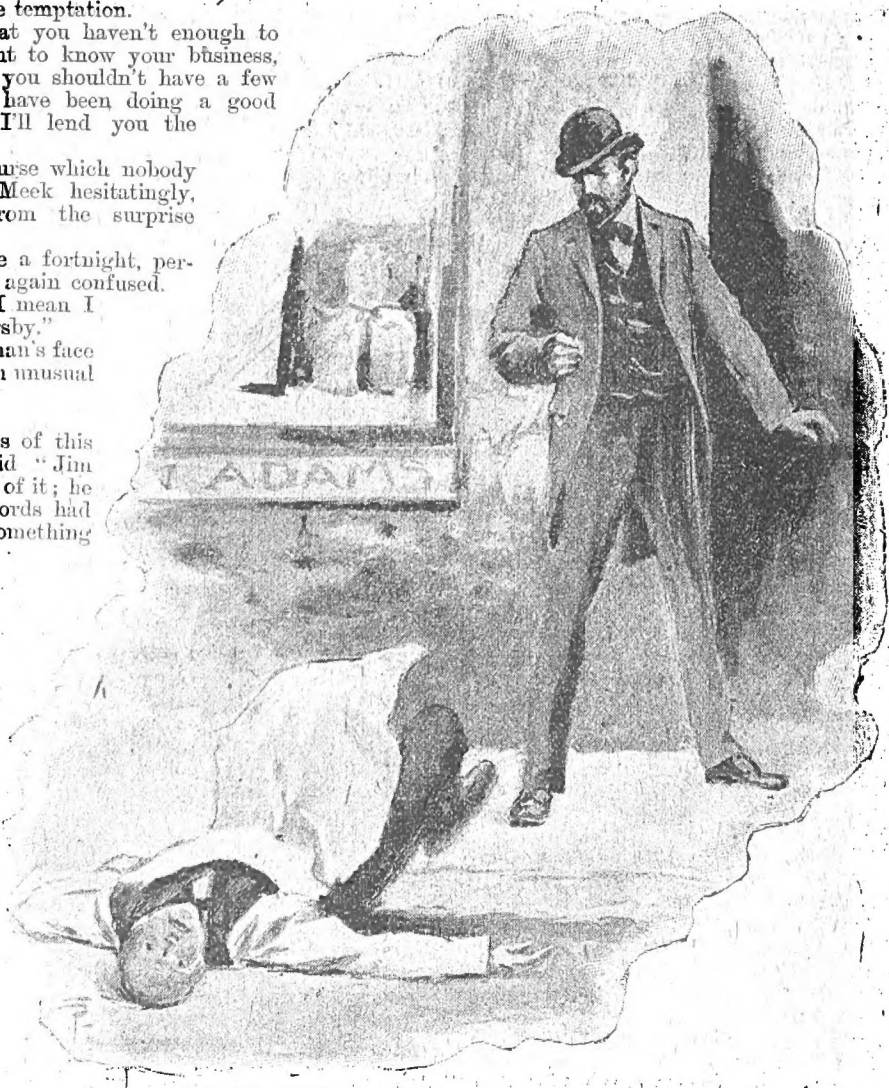
Rigsby scanned the old man's face narrowly and then asked, with unusual bluntness:—

"Who to?"

Startled by the abruptness of this last inquiry, Old Meek said "Jim Hendy" before he was aware of it; he coloured immediately the words had left his lips and muttered something inaudible, but Rigsby cut him short.

"Look here, Meek," Rigsby went on somewhat more sternly than was his wont. "That fellow has too much to do with it already; if he didn't have that money coming in every month, he would be a better man, because he would have to work harder for a living and then he would keep that business together properly instead of letting it go to rack and ruin. You are doing him harm, not good, by encouraging him in his laziness. When did he have that money of you?"

"Yesterday. But I think you are rather hard on him," ventured Meek timidly. "I don't think he is as bad as you make out, and he'll pay me that little loan when he can, I am sure. I wouldn't say anything more against him, Rigsby, if I were you; I really wouldn't."



Meek fell violently to the ground.

"Here is the money," said the harness maker, after paying a visit to an inner room. "You're quite welcome to it for a month if you need it, but I'll talk to Hendy and make him repay that loan to you."

"No, you mustn't—you really mustn't!" cried Old Meek in a frenzy of alarm. "You see it is only between us two and it isn't fair to make it known. You promise me that you won't say anything to him about it—you will promise, won't you?"

The old man was in such a state of excitement that Rigsby pitied him and gave the promise. But when Meek Adams had left his shop, the harness maker repented having given his word, and began to persuade himself that he was not bound by his promise, seeing that what he was inclined to do was in the interest of fairness, and was simply an act of justice to the too confiding and benevolent man.

Rigsby saw Hendy that evening at the end of the street, near the green; the carpenter had evidently imbibed rather more than was good for him although he was still a long way off intoxication, and the harness maker's indignation rose at the thought that Old Meek's money had been put to such a use.

"Hendy, when do you intend to pay back that money you borrowed yesterday of Meek Adams?" queried Rigsby, hardly able to contain his wrath.

"When I choose," growled the carpenter angrily. "So he has been boasting about lending me a pound or two when I wanted the money to buy wood with, eh? The old idiot! I'll talk to him about that!"

"He hasn't been boasting at all," returned Rigsby, feeling half sorry that he had not kept his promise to Adams.

"I heard of it accidentally and I thought you ought

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to know that he wants the money himself very badly to pay a bill. He's a good old man and you ought to make haste and pay him back."

Jim Hendy merely growled again and passed on; but he was angry that Meek should have told anyone about the little transaction, and his wrath increased as he brooded over the fact that he would not now have so good a chance of forgetting to return the money lent to him.

Three hours later, as he walked down the street towards the general shop, his heart was so full of animosity towards the old man that he determined to enter the shop and "have it out with him." But as he reached the window, Meek came outside to see whether the contents were well displayed.

"What did you tell old Rigsby that I had some money of you for?" inquired Hendy with a muttered oath. He stepped up to the old man and shook his clenched fist in his face, causing Meek to shrink back.

"Suppose I did ask you for a loan, you needn't tell all the village about it."

"I only told Rigsby, and that was by accident," protested Meek. "He ought not to have said anything about it; he promised me he wouldn't."

"You should have kept your mouth shut altogether!" snarled Hendy. "You old miser, you deserve to lose your money, putting it away in the bank and never doing anything with it! Now look here! I'm not going to pay that money, just to serve you out for chattering about it, and if you say another word I'll give you a taste of this!" And once more he shook his clenched fist in Old Meek's face.

Jackson, the cab proprietor, who saw the incident, told us afterwards that he couldn't describe exactly what took place; he couldn't tell whether Hendy actually struck the old man or whether Meek Adams stepped back to avoid a blow and tripped over the stone flag outside the door. All that could be said was that Meek fell violently to the ground, the back of his head striking the cobbles with great force.

Meek Adams was carried inside and placed on his bed by friendly hands, and the doctor was hurriedly sent for. But the blow was too severe, and it soon became known that the good old man's life was ebbing away. They restored him to consciousness, and the first thing he did was to ask for Jim Hendy.

"Tell the others to go out, Jim," he murmured feebly, the words coming at intervals. "I want to speak to you alone."

The others respected Old Meek's request and withdrew, wondering what could be the nature of the communication. They learnt afterwards from Jim Hendy himself.

"I am dying, my boy," said the old man, "and I want to explain it all."

Meek Adams' voice grew stronger, and it seemed that by an effort of the will, he had summoned up strength enough to speak with comparative ease. "You can have that money—you are as welcome to that as to all the other money I have given to you or spent on you. I am sorry that I cannot leave you any more, but you have had it all, Jim."

He ceased speaking, and Jim Hendy looked at him with widening eyes, he had borrowed money occasionally from the old man, but these words hinted at something more.

"I loved your mother once, Jim, when she was in London, but she preferred your father. I was much older than she was, and I suppose it was natural. When I heard of your father's death, I came down here and took the shop so as to be near her—I thought she might learn to like me in time; but she died. She left you without a penny, and I went to the lawyers and made arrangements to have you sent to school at my expense. You were treated as one of the schoolmaster's family, for you were only a child.

"It was rumoured that your mother had left some money invested, and I thought it well to let people believe it. But I paid the fees, I scraped together enough to apprentice you and buy the business, and I have paid the annuity ever since—the money you receive every month, Jim. There is no money invested, and my only regret is that the payments will stop when I am dead."

* * * * *

There was some talk of having Jim Hendy arrested on a charge of manslaughter, but the village policeman pointed out that the evidence was not sufficient. Popular indignation subsided rather more quickly than might have been anticipated, but this was largely due to the changed manner of Jim Hendy himself.

He told the story of the old man's benevolence and the cause of it, and he wept bitterly over Old Mark's grave; and from that day Jim Hendy of Winsted was a different man.

G. Williams.

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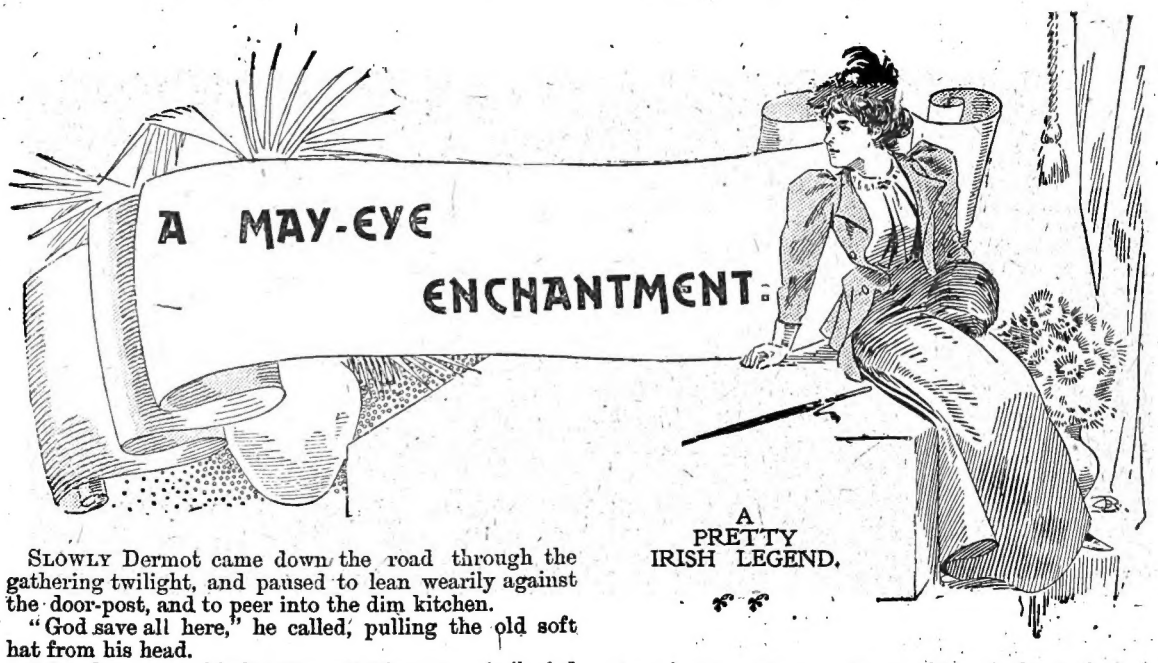

A MAY-EVE ENCHANTMENT.

A PRETTY IRISH LEGEND.

SLOWLY Dermot came down the road through the gathering twilight, and paused to lean wearily against the door-post, and to peer into the dim kitchen.

"God save all here," he called, pulling the old soft hat from his head.

"Arrah, save ye, kindly, Dermot Dhu; come in," cried the hospitable farmer's wife, coming smiling forth, "come in, agra, an' rest yerself. It's a long way ye've come, I'll go bail. Will ye have a sup o' milk, Dermot, or what?"

"Sure, I wouldn't be afther askin' the like of ye, Mrs. Kavanaugh, thank ye kindly, on May-eve, and maybe have all yer luck gone from ye for the year that's comin'."

And the piper smiled dubiously.

"Arrah, don't be talkin', Dermot, but come in an' put off yer pipes. Sure, I'll just shake a grain o' salt in the noggin, an' it'll be all as one the fairies'll never know a word about it. An', be the same token," ran on the good woman, as the piper lifted his pipes from his shoulder and sank on the comfortable settle; "'tis a fine grand harvest o' rowan branches an' primrose the boys an' girls has gathered to put about the place an' keep away the good people this May-day, an' maybe ye'd give us a hand wid them, Dermot, when ye're rested, for there's no tellin' when Jim'll be back from the town this night, an' he's like Lanna Machree's dog, goin' a step o' the road wid every one he meets, an' them tinkers o' boys does all be gone away down to the cross-roads, dressin' up the Maybush, the wild hares, for the morra, an' sure I daren't lave little Johneen up on the roof, at all, at all, he's that thricky. So maybe ye'd make a shift to climb up on the old laddher, Dermot, an' see could ye reach to twist a shlip o' the rowan among the thatch, to keep us all from the fire this blessed year; while Nannie an' meself an' the childher does be puttin' the primroses about the dure."

"Sure, I will, thin, an' welcome, Mrs. Kavanaugh," cried the piper, heartily, when the busy woman paused for breath. "Where are the branches an' the flowers? Sure, I'll have it done in no time."

"Here, childher," called Mrs. Kavanaugh from the door to an invisible audience, who answered her summons with shrieks of laughter, "lave them chickens alone, an' come in—musha, would ye look at that now, an' nothin'll do her but to go to Tralee this night," with which exasperated cry, Mrs. Kavanaugh started in pursuit of a fleeting fowl, while the bright-eyed, dancing persecutors of the unfortunate one poured into the kitchen and flung at the feet of the piper great trailing masses of magical mountain ash, and shimmering clouds of pale primroses, whose faint radiance gleaming on door-post and threshold, would guard the house and home from malign fairy influence on this most dangerous day of the year.

With snatches of song and ready peals of laughter, piper and children set to work, and before evening shadows had settled on the scene the roof's edge was a dark mass of verdure, and the primroses hung their pale, sweet heads along lintel and door-post, and even lay a silken carpet for the feet, at the door, where, however, careful Nannie had first strewed some sifted ashes and threatened with dire punishment any of the prattling army who dared to set foot thereon.

"Whin mornin' comes, we'll see the print av a fut," she averred, gravely, "an' if it's turned in, 'tis a weddin' 'twill be, but if it's turned out, it's a funeral we'll be havin' wisha, before the year's out."

"Well, maybe 'twill be turned in, Nannie, an' for yerself," said Piper Dermot; "an' now I'll be travellin' on, Mrs. Kavanaugh," and he slung his pipes over his shoulder and caught up his hat in readiness to depart.

"Sure it's not goin' ye'd be, Dermot, widout bite or sup," cried the hospitable woman, aghast, "an' afther all yer toilin'. Arrah, sit down, man, to yer supper; sure, the childher are wild to hear a tune before ye go."

"Not to-night," answered he, absently, glancing up at the darkening sky, "I must be goin'. I've far to go to-night—far to go."

"It's not—arrah, Dermot"—pausing and casting an anxious, fearful look about her, while her voice fell to an awe-struck whisper. "It's not on the hills ye'd be wanderin' to-night, of all nights in the year. Is it May

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Eve ye'd be venturin' there among the good people? Sure, they'll put an enchantment on ye, Dermot, an' keep ye there to play for thim, ye that can play so grand intirely. Stop here, agra, an' don't go next nor near the fairy paths to-night."

But Dermot was not listening; he was leaning forward with a rapt look on his pale face. "I must go," he muttered, hurriedly, and with a farewell wave of his hand, he left the house abruptly and struck out, bolting up the hillside path, brushing the branches aside in his haste.

"'Tis twice I heard that tune to-night," he muttered. "I must know where it came from," and on he rushed impelled by some strange prankish power that seemed to urge him forward, while ever and anon he seemed to catch a clear, distant small echo of some weird music that fainted and died ere he could catch its full meaning.

Daylight had gone and grey mists were creeping down when the piper emerged from the woody lane, and set his feet on the winding path that led across the upland to the well-known fairy hill, and as he stumbled onward, with wide-open, unseeing eyes, he was suddenly recalled to his senses by an apparition that stood smiling in his way—a gentle maid, with a shawl thrown over her fair locks, who looked with wonder in her grey eyes upon his pale, wild face.

"An' where are ye goin', Dermot?" she asked, and he roused himself from his dream and answered her, still in a nervous, absent manner.

"Beyant, beyant. But, Moya, 'tis yerself should be at home, colleen. Go!"

"If yer crossin' the hill, Dermot, I'll put these on ye to keep ye safe."

Afraid to question him further, remembering the gossip of the village about Piper Dermot's knowledge of the "good people," yet unwilling to let him go unprotected, she bent forward and, ere he knew it, had fastened in his coat a glimmering bunch of the same golden blossoms that he had just strewn at the Kavanaugh's door.

He nodded, muttered his thanks, and was gone.

Moya stood silent, watching, and as he pressed on, he listened eagerly for a recurrence of the fairy music, and, not hearing it and suddenly remembering, plucked from his coat the fragrant badge of safety, and with a regretful gesture, cast them upon the ground; she, too, threw aside the blossoms she held and followed him, while the last grey mist of light faded into the night, and the pale stars slowly stole out and stood watching above.

When Moya reached the well-worn green mound the people called the fairy rath, she paused, exhausted, out of breath, and discouraged, for Dermot had disappeared in the darkness.

About her the dark shapes of trees and bushes waved in the pale starlight, stirred by a soft wind that blew fresh and grateful on her face, and, as she rested, bewildered, frightened, the soft breeze's caress seemed to become something more tangible, like the brush of silken garments.

The swaying forms of branch and tree, in the faintly growing light of rose and pearl, resolved themselves into the shapes of graceful dancers. Moya felt herself drawn into the slow dance, to the ever-increasing melody of mystic music that grew louder and sweeter as they circled and floated, changing, round and round, back and forth, upon the summit of the fairy rath, where, in the centre, with all the wild, eager, longing gone from his eyes, and an ineffable, ecstatic content upon his face, sat Dermot, playing for the fairy throng the enchanting melody to which her feet were compelled to move.

* * * * *

Midday was shining bright upon the village. All the people of the townland, fresh and gay in holiday attire, were pouring forth upon the roads that led to where, upon a broad green, the Maybush stood decked with garlands, ready for the festivities.

No thought of evil hap had shadowed the merriment of the day. No evil spirit, in the guise of an unknown old woman had appeared at the door to beg for fire, salt or butter, which would surely be refused.

Each careful housewife had placed overnight a spent coal beneath the rowan-wreathed churn, and another under her baby's cradle, and, rising before sunrise, had decorated the soft-eyed cows with branches of primroses and marsh marigolds, while her daughters washed their rosy faces with the beautifying dews of this first day of May.

Moya, alone, was missed by her young companions and many were the wondering exclamations as to her absence, as group after group joined the throng and danced in circles about the garlanded Maybush.

Pipers and fiddlers, gathered from all the country-side, sat and added their merry music to the busy noises of the festival.

But one was absent, and late and slow he came down the hill, haggard and pale, with an unseeing look in his eyes, and hardly heeding or answering the hearty welcome that greeted him on all sides, moved to the centre of the dancing circle and began to play the fairy music he had learned upon the rath.

As the first notes floated out upon the air, the other pipers stopped and stared in surprise, and a sudden hush fell upon the throng, who, after one instant of amazement, yielded themselves to the mystic melody, and all, young and old, impelled by some unknown power, began to dance, with a mad grace that was never known before, round and round, in eddying circles, about the nodding, whispering branches of the fairy tree.

Twice, three times, did Dermot play the bewitching melody, and as the last notes died away, the dancers, breathless, fascinated, crowded about him, while some of the maids flung a chaplet of pale spring flowers around his dark, bowed head,

"Once more," they entreated him to play. "Once more." They had never danced to such music before.

And through the piper's weary brain were crowding strange memories of the fairy revels of the night before, of the unearthly grace of Moya, and the dearly-bought charm of the magical strain, and of some injunction laid upon him when the scene had faded from his view at the first glimmering of coming day. Not to play the melody for mortals more than three times. Was that it? He could not be sure. He hardly cared. The enchantment was still upon him, and he was conscious only of a dull longing to know what was going on inside of the green hill that had shut out the spirits from his sight at dawn.

Recklessly, he took up his pipes in answer to the clamour of the multitude. They started to their feet, ready to dance, when, as the first musical strain came from the pipes, it suddenly broke into a harsh, cracked wail, and the piper flung up his hands and fell forward on his face, dead.

GERALDINE HAVERTY.

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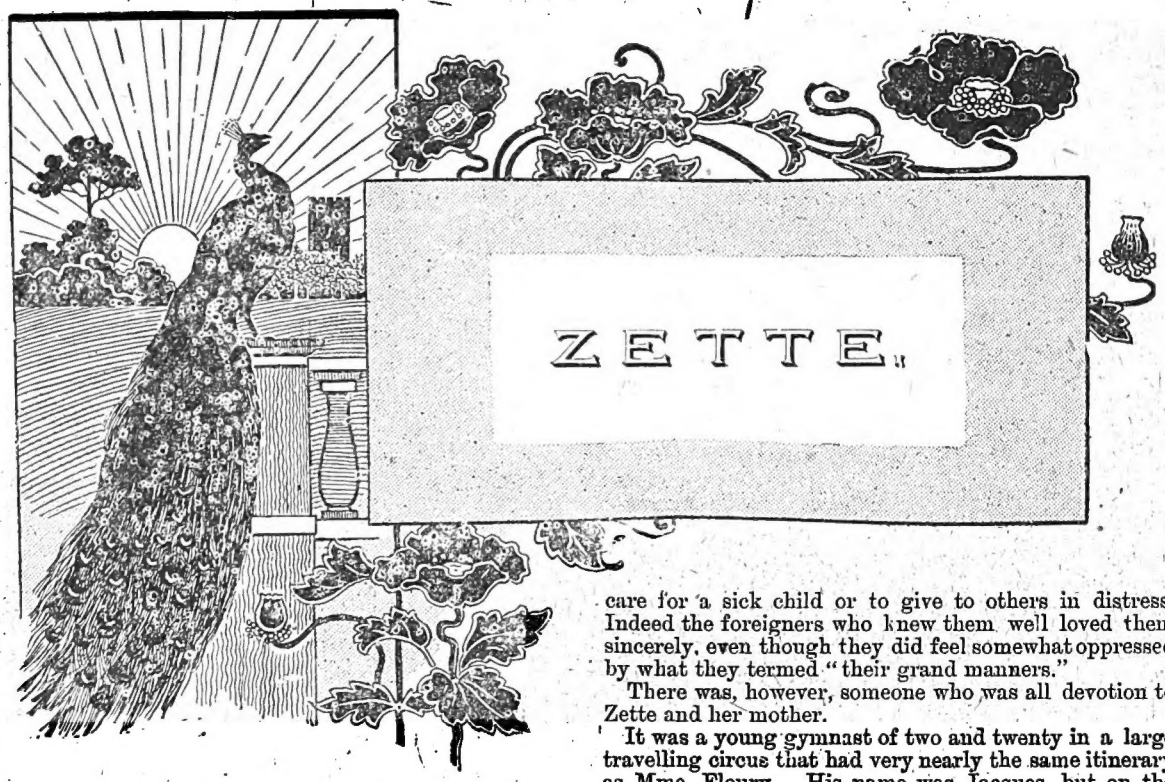

Upon the posters which hung on the outside of the caravan she was styled "Mlle. Antonia, Somnambule Extralucide."

Her mother called her Zette—her real name was Suzanne.

She was a pretty girl, not very large, with fair complexion and long black hair that she let float about her during her consultations, though ordinarily she wore it in a loose coil upon the nape of a neck that was perfect.

Never having done much work, her hands were delicate and well shaped. She was enough of a coquette to wish to keep them so. She had a finely modelled form, and to have seen her simply dressed in some quiet colour, with the gait of a wise little workwoman, one would never have suspected her strange calling.

Her mother, Mme. Floury, was as little like others of her class as her daughter. About her there was nothing in common with the shrews who frequent fairs in red dresses and soiled skirts. She had the air of a little merchant who was good and proper with a winning, honest smile, and people stopped before the caravan and even entered there (without thinking of the charlatanism on the posters) in order to see the interior of this small dwelling that smelled so sweet.

The vehicle was painted brown, with a thread of gold running the lengths of the plinths. There was a tiny balcony in front of it, and on this balcony convulvulus and nasturtium vines, planted in boxes, twined about wires up to the roof, where they clustered in bright-hued bunches.

Along the route persons stared in amazement at this queer coach all covered with garlands of flowers.

The two women were always together, but associated very little with their neighbours. They were not proud, and having the best of hearts were the first to offer to care for a sick child or to give to others in distress. Indeed the foreigners who knew them well loved them sincerely, even though they did feel somewhat oppressed by what they termed "their grand manners."

There was, however, someone who was all devotion to Zette and her mother.

It was a young gymnast of two and twenty in a large travelling circus that had very nearly the same itinerary as Mme. Floury. His name was Jacques, but on the playbills they spelled it Jack. He was exceedingly handsome and of no common type. There was fire in his eyes and much intelligence in his smile. There was, too, much tenderness in this same smile, especially when he spoke to Zette. His love for this pretty brunette—so unlike any other woman he had seen about him in his wandering life—was very sincere.

Near her he felt himself quite another man to what he was in the circus. There was such an atmosphere of honesty surrounding Zette that his own manners, when with her, were altogether different from what they had been, and he was astonished at how well they became him.

Then, too, he had dreamed of being loved by this sweet girl and of never being separated from her. Their positions accorded admirably. His salary was good, and some day perhaps he might enter one of the great circuses of Lyons or Paris. It would be charming to find so sweet a little wife awaiting his coming after his work was done.

He had often spoken to Zette of these plans. He loved her so dearly that it could not be possible she did not love him at least a little.

Zette always listened silently, visibly touched by what she heard, and he thought each time she would say "Yes," but when he had finished by asking, with such pleading in his eyes, "Will you be my wife, Zette?" she replied very gravely, "No."

Then Jacques would be astonished. Why not? Could it be that she did not believe him when he said he loved her; that she had no confidence in him; that she did not love him?

"Yes, I love you," Zette answered sweetly, "but I do not wish to marry."

And she would never say why.

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One day, however, Mme. Floury blamed her for refusing the hand of this brave lad.

"Listen, mother," she said. "I adore Jacques, and I believe I shall always remain single because I do not wish to marry him. Do you remember the day when we went together to the circus? I saw as we entered how all the women who were there turned their lorgnettes towards him, and afterwards they smiled and talked about him and tried to attract his attention by applauding him. I ought perhaps to have been proud to think that this man whom they all wanted loved me, and that I had only to say the word to be his wife. Ah, well, in my heart there was nothing but jealousy. I wanted to tear the lorgnettes away from those women. From what I suffered that evening I understood how much more I might suffer if we were married. No, that cannot be. He is too handsome. See? Suppose some day, when he had grown tired of me, one of those women should take him from me. I would die surely, You know now, mother, why I cannot say yes."

But notwithstanding this obstinate refusal, which he could not explain, Jacques came every day. He no longer mentioned the subject to Zette, understanding that he was contending against a fixed resolve, except once when he said to her:

"You will not have me, Zette, and I do not want any other woman. Some day, though, you may change your mind, and then you need only hold out your hand and say to me, 'Let us be married, and it will make me happy.'"

So after thus simply settling the affair Jacques was like a brother in the house. It was he who in the springtime planted the seeds in the boxes upon the little balcony. It was he who twined the tendrils about the wires, and it was he who at all seasons furnished the gilded porcelain vases that held the flowers.

These flowers were a great luxury to Zette.

This state of things did not long continue, however. The young girl was now twenty and Jacques twenty-six. One evening he presented his friends with tickets to the circus. It was the last day of a long continued fair, and Zette and her mother had nothing to do. So they decked themselves in their best and went early.

Mme. Floury was much amused with the horses, the rope-dancers, the clowns, the trained dogs. Zette thought only of Jacques, whose name on the programme occupied a line to itself, and whose apparatus was hung up at the top of the high tent.

The latter consisted of bars, with copper balls that shone, a maze of trapezes, ropes and pulleys, and the young girl, a little frightened, inquired if it was all secure.

At last the first part of the performance was over, and keeping time to a slow waltz Jacques appeared. He was as beautiful as a god in his silk tights, that displayed to advantage his superbly moulded form, and, for the rest, his costume consisted of black satin calecon, spangled with gold.

After having responded by a bow to the applause of the crowd and by a smile to Zette's smile, he darted up a rope to his trapeze.

The preliminaries were gone through amid prolonged bravos, for the handsome gymnast was a favourite, and it was truly a pleasure to see him act—the supple body so pliant, yet so marvelously exact in its movements.

Then there came silence—even the orchestra was still.

It was to be the hit of the evening and a new feat that was to give an added glory to the circus. He was to leap from one trapeze to another, with his face and head covered, then suddenly drop from this giddy height upon a net stretched below him.

The two trapezes were swinging with a regular movement. Jacques, standing on a little board, his head enveloped in a black velvet bag, put forth his hand blindly. The crowd held its breath. The man was going to jump—he had jumped!

A piercing cry rent the air.

Missing the second trapeze, which had been badly regulated, Jacques fell to the net, but it proved too frail to support his weight, and striking upon the seats he rolled to the ground, where he lay motionless.

With a cry of horror, Zette sprang to her feet, rigid and pale, her eyes fixed upon the spot where the men were now carrying away the apparently lifeless body of her friend.

Then suddenly, seizing her mother's arm, "Come," she said in hollow voice.

Breaking through the crowd, the two women reached the stables, but were refused admission.

For a long while they remained at the entrance, listening to what was said around them, but no one knew anything. Finally Mme. Floury saw a clown whom she recognised as one of Jacques' friends. He was just coming out of the refreshment room when she called him.

"The net broke the force of the fall," said the man, whose face looked troubled, even under the paint. "The doctor says he will be lame for life, and that this ends for him his profession as a gymnast. Poor fellow! But he has something laid up for a rainy day."

Mme. Floury looked at Zette. She was very pale, and her eyes were fixed upon the man as he spoke as though trying to find if he lied. At last she said, "Let us go."

And thanking the clown by a gesture she left the circus.

The two women did not speak as they traversed the grounds of the fair, and they were still silent as they ascended their own little stairway. But when Mme. Floury had lighted the candle she saw Zette sitting beside the bed, with a strange smile on her lips. She felt frightened for her and went to her.

"Of what are you thinking, little daughter?" she asked, trying to reassure herself.

Then Zette laid her head upon her mother's shoulder, with a childlike gesture.

"I think—that now I can marry Jacques," she told her.

J. W. G.

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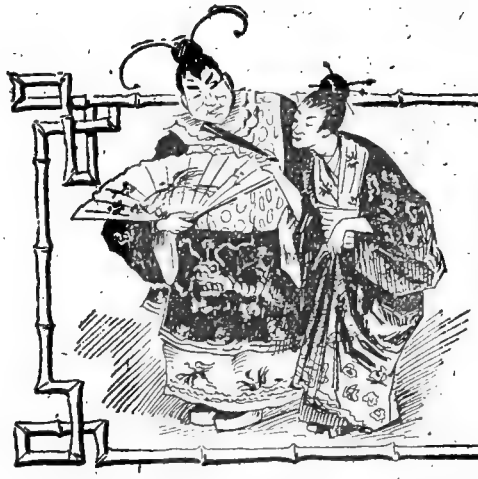

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XI.—HE COMES HOME LOADED WITH PLANS, AND MEETS WITH SEVERAL REBUFFS.

THAT Mr. Bowser was about to make a break of some sort was apparent to Mrs. Bowser before he had been home five minutes, but she asked no questions, and he managed to keep quiet until after dinner. Then he rubbed his hands together and chuckled softly and said:

"I suppose that if I should tell you that I expect to make a clear two hundred pounds a month at least for the next five years you'd call it one of my fads, wouldn't you?"

"Perhaps not," answered Mrs. Bowser doubtfully. "Are you going to speculate?"

"Not at all. I have simply struck a sure thing."

"If it's a sure thing it will be nice. What is it?"

"I'll tell you, though you won't understand. Not one woman in ten thousand has a business head on her. I have often wished you knew something of business, so that I could talk to you. It isn't your fault that you were created to read novels and gad about to the shops in search of bargains, and so I don't lay it up against you. I'll tell you what my new movement is. I am going in for pigs."

"I can understand that much," quietly replied Mrs. Bowser. "You are going to raise pigs in order to supply the market with pork."

"That's the plan exactly, and you deserve praise for grasping my meaning so quickly. I propose to buy two hundred pigs. A pig three months old can be bought for a pound."

"And two hundred pigs for two hundred pounds."

"That's it. I invest £200 in pigs. At the age of one year every pig is ready to be made into pork. The average weight of a one-year old pig ready for the butcher is two hundred pounds. Fresh pork is worth sixpence halfpenny per pound. That is £5 10s. for every pig, or £4 10s. clear profit. Any man with an ounce of brains in his head can make £5,000 clear profit in two years. Is there any fad about that?"

"I'm sorry I haven't got a business head on me," said Mrs. Bowser as she got pencil and paper, "but I will try to keep up with you. Where are you going to fatten your pigs?"

"Why, on a farm, of course. You don't suppose I'm going to turn the basement of our house into a pig pen, do you?"

"But, where is your farm?"

Mr. Bowser's jaw dropped. He hadn't accounted for a farm.

"A farmer reckons that it costs threepence per pound to make pork for market," continued Mrs. Bowser. "Those are his figures even when he owns his farm and

"Woman, do you take me for a fool?"

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grows his own corn. It will take, in addition to all other feed, at least twenty bushels of corn for every one of your pigs. Have you taken into consideration the buying of 4,000 bushels of corn, Mr. Bowser?"

He began to flush up and breathe hard, but he made no reply.

"To look after two hundred pigs you must keep at least five men. It will cost you a good deal for their wages. There will be more or less loss to take into consideration. You must also allow for butchering and getting your pork to market. And you haven't counted in——"

"Woman, do you take me for a fool?" shouted Mr. Bowser as he jumped off his chair and frightened the family cat under the piano.

"Not at all," she calmly replied. "A fool would go into this pig scheme and lose £1,000 instead of making £5,000, but you won't."

He didn't know whether to bluff it out or give in gracefully, but finally decided to do the latter. Her

Then the tramp broke loose and made for the street.

facts and figures were beyond dispute and made him feel cold, but for fear she would feel puffed up over it, he said:

"Of course, I should have reckoned it all out to a penny before investing my money. What you say is all guess-work, but we'll let it go for a time. In fact, the pig scheme was a secondary matter. I've got a better thing than that. I was in hopes Brown might drop in this evening and talk it over with me."

"Why not talk it over with me?" asked Mrs. Bowser.

"You won't understand it, of course, but I'll give you an outline of it. How much do you suppose a man down in Surrey has made out of chickens in the last year!"

"Two hundred pounds, perhaps."

"Over £1,000 clear profit, and next year he will double that amount. I've got my facts and figures down pat, and I'm going in for chicken rearing."

"What are your facts and figures?"

"You can't understand them, but I'll give you a few. I start with 1,000 hens."

"Where do you start?"

"Where do I start? Perhaps you imagine I'm going to make a hen roost of the top of the house! I start in our back yard, of course. I buy 1,000 hens at a shilling apiece."

"I don't know where you are going to do it," said Mrs. Bowser. "The very lowest figure you can buy them at is eighteenpence, and the fowls will be pretty poor at that. Having got your thousand hens together, then what?"

"Then I depend on eggs and chickens," replied Mr. Bowser. "I reckon on 500 eggs per day. We'll call it fifty dozen, and put the price at a shilling per dozen. There's fifty shillings per day certain. One thousand hens ought to hatch ten thousand chickens per year. Each chicken will readily sell for——"

"Just wait a minute. Let us begin with the back yard. We have an area of 30ft. by 45ft. One thousand hens wouldn't have room to flap their wings in that space."

"Are you trying to make out that I don't know enough to come in when it rains!" shouted Mr. Bowser as he bobbed up with furious gestures.

"Not at all; you are going in for poultry farming. You are going to make a fortune. I haven't a business head on me, of course, but I do understand a little arithmetic. You might coop up fifty hens in the back yard, but not more. As to eggs, if you get two hundred a day from a thousand hens you would do well. The increase would not be half what you imagine. Then you have not counted in the expense of the coops, nor feed and help. You see——"

"Yes, I see—of course I see! I see that you know nothing about poultry. I tell you that any man with an ounce of brains can make £1,000 a year out of a thousand fowls."

"Well, let us see how it is done."

"It's done in a business way, of course."

"Then we'll work it out in a business way. You will want wood and nails for the coops, and there will be the carpenter to pay. How much wood——"

"Not a plank—not a foot!" howled Mr. Bowser.

"But how are you going to do?"

"None of your business! I go to work and invent a plan to make £1,000 a year as easy as rolling off a log. I come home feeling pleasant over it. Like an ass I state the plan to you, and you immediately and maliciously set out to tear it to pieces. Woman——"

It was lucky for Mrs. Bowser that just then he heard the voice of a tramp at the back door asking the cook for something to eat. It offered him a diversion, and he took advantage of it.

He turned from Mrs. Bowser and rushed downstairs, followed by the cat, and he fell upon that unsuspicious tramp like a thunderbolt.

There was a mix-up, three or four whoops and yells, and then the tramp broke loose and spread his wings and made for the street.

He didn't stop to open the gate, but went over the fence like a bird, and the chase was over.

When Mr. Bowser returned to the sitting-room pencil and paper had disappeared, and the diplomatic Mrs. Bowser was looking into the almanac to see what day in the week the next Bank Holiday would fall on.

M. Quad.

Next Week: He Buys a Recipe for the Benefit of the Poor.

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For Love of Stella.

I HATED him from the moment I saw him with her, because I saw as well that she loved him with all her body and soul.

Then, one day, as I watched the manner in which her beautiful eyes looked up at him while they walked and talked together, a suspicion leapt into my brain. It became belief. From that hour I watched them stealthily; and at last I came upon them, unseen, at a place I had not supposed they knew of.

It was a shady and secluded spot between two hills, quite remote from the village, and indeed from any habitation. It was a lonely place, with the ruins of a mill above and a deep and dark pool below; lonely, save for a jealous wretch like myself or a pair of lovers.

This, then, I muttered to myself, as I crouched and watched them with a savage heart, was the bower they frequented undisturbed, and where they squandered the hours that were so torturingly long to me.

I heard in the village that he was going away upon the next day, that "some business" was calling him back to town. And I heard and saw more; whispers that were full of meaning glances that conveyed what the whispers dared not convey.

My jealousy, then, had not made me mad. My suspicion, my belief were shared by others! In a little while they would discuss openly Stella's shame.

That night I planned his death, and on the next I lay in wait for him. I had learnt during the day that he would walk to the station, which lay a mile outside of the village, since he had sent his baggage ahead during the afternoon.

It would be a fine night, though dark, for such a jaunty gentleman. The air was balmy and fragrant, and the sod by the roadside, green and elastic. As I crouched there I laughed softly, and wondered why people should think a murderer such a terrible being.

But how the time dragged. Presently I heard the soft sound of wheels approaching slowly along the moist and sandy road. My good humour gave way to sudden anger, and I swore in the darkness. Had the fellow decided, at the last moment, to be driven? In such a case I should have two, himself and the driver, to deal with. But as the vehicle approached I breathed more freely; for though I could but dimly make out his form, I perceived by his voice that the driver was some half-drunken farmer returning from a protracted visit to some village bar.

I slipped back into the wood, and lighting a match glanced at my watch. I saw there was still an hour before the midnight express would be due to leave. So I composed myself comfortably on the bank, with one eye and both ears open, like a watch-dog, and fell into a reverie.

I pictured my successful rival bidding his last good-bye to Stella, her tears, his kisses, his flattery, his lies. Then I saw him set forth, erect, his head up, his hands in his pockets, as was his fashion. I smiled to myself as I reflected how I could bring him down, and on the comedy that would ensue.

Was not that his whistle that I heard, the air of some love song I had heard him humming through the village streets?

Perhaps he found the walk along the dark road lonely and was endeavouring to keep his spirits at their normal level.

Bother him! what had happened? Did he suspect something that he had stopped his whistling? I would slip into the road.

Ah! there is a tiny flame in the darkness. He has halted merely to light a cigar. The burning match blazes for an instant, then dies out upon the road. Now the glow of the cigar grows brighter as my unsuspecting friend approaches.

Now he is abreast of me! I could have touched him. A moment more and he has passed, not dreaming that another being, mad with jealousy and hate, is crouching in the grass at his feet.

And now I have sprung up after him and am upon

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him, like a panther, my steel-like fingers about his throat, dragging him down to the road and choking to silence the cry he tries to make. His whole body struggles frantically and his finger-nails are driven into my wrists; but nothing could lessen my grip upon his throat; and soon his struggles cease, and he lies limp upon the road.

I turned him upon his face and bound his wrists tightly; and turning him on his back once more, gagged him. Then I sat and waited until consciousness had returned fully; and in the meanwhile I relieved his pockets of some of the fragrant cigars, and smoked one, enjoying the luxury of the performance, and laughing aloud at the humour of the situation and the success of my undertaking.

Presently my fine fellow stirred, and weakly endeavoured to sit up. I leant up over him. He was breathing heavily, and I could see that he was convulsed with fear. To his dilated sight my face in the pale darkness must have seemed a very devil's as my eyes stared into his.

"Ah!" I said coolly. "So you are recovering?" I knew he could not reply, but I knew that now he could hear and understand every word; and I revelled in the supreme mastery of my position.

"You look surprised," I said. "Let me help you to sit up." I jerked him into a sitting posture. "In a moment I must ask you to rise altogether, as we have a tedious walk before us."

I stared into his face and saw that it was frowning with rage and convulsed with fear. Nevertheless he tried to kick me with his nearest foot.

"It is possible you do not know me," I went on, as I blew a cloud of smoke into his face. "For the past two weeks I have been a thing of too small consequence for you to notice. To-night that is changed. Come!" I exclaimed sharply, grasping his shoulder and shaking him. "Confess! You have won the love of Stella by your lying promises!" And at the thought I struck him heavily upon the face, so that he fell back prone upon the road. But even then he tried to do me violence with his heavy walking-boots.

So I retorted upon his shins, and he actually rolled over with the pain.

It had began to rain.

The pleasure of our march through the woods, I reflected, would not be enhanced by this atmospheric change.

I raised my prisoner by the shoulders and made him stand. Immediately he attempted to run, and I had to detain him forcibly.

"Now," I said to him, "you will go ahead of me, do you understand? I will direct your steps. You have only to put one foot in front of the other and everything will go beautifully. If you are not tractable, if you show a desire to hang back, there is this."

And I laid the cold blade of a knife upon his cheek.

Then we went forward through the darkness and the drizzle. But why dwell upon that dreary tramp? It would indeed make a chapter to tell of the arduous march; of how my fine fellow would run into some great tree, striking his head, or stumble over a root and fall his entire length, scratching and bruising his face, but never breaking an arm or a leg, for that would have been unfortunate. How I made the black wood ring with my merry and cheering laughter. And all the time not a sigh or a word of complaint from my brave companion, thanks to the liberal manner in which I had, with so much forethought, literally bound his lips to silence. Nevertheless I had on several occasions to resort to a peculiar sort of persuasion, since he evinced a strong inclination to go contrary to my wishes.

At last our haven was in sight. It was the old mill above the pool; the pool where he and Stella had spent so many agreeable hours. Although it was dark, I perceived that he had recognised the place; and I grew suddenly hot with anger as I thought of my wrongs. From this very place had I not with burning eyes watched him upon the grassy slope below, beside the still water of the pool, kissing the lips of the woman whose hand I had never touched with mine own! Heavens! when I thought of it my brain seemed on fire; and then I laughed in mad triumph as I remembered that here I had him at my mercy. Mercy? I laughed again.

Then I lit a lantern and held it aloft so that we saw each other face to face. Mine must have reflected what was passing in my brain, for he seemed to grow white, and shrank back. Then suddenly, without warning he rushed at me and tried again to kick me.

"Be careful!" I exclaimed, as I endeavoured to get behind him. "The place, as you see, is ruinous, and the floor is rotten."

As I spoke, his clumsy foot went through a plank and he was thrown backwards, wrenching his leg. I managed to extricate him, and with some difficulty bound his ankles, for, despite the injury he had just sustained, he resented the operation. Then I removed the gag. The first word he uttered was an oath.

"Unfasten my hands," he roared and his voice was like thunder.

"I trust I will not be so foolish," I remarked as I sat down upon a box within a few feet of him. "Now, we can talk pleasantly."

"By Heaven!" he roared again.

His chest was heaving with agitation, and he banged his heavy heels upon the quivering floor. "You shall pay for this joke!"

"Joke?" I answered. 'I am glad you think it is a joke. In such a case you have a remarkable faculty forseeing the funny side of things. Now," I said changing my tone and giving him a kick in the ribs, "confess before I have done with you that you have gained Stella's heart by cunning and deceit."

"How dare you mention her name? You vile coward! To think that you ever polluted the same air she breathed!"

"Tut!" I said, though I felt the blood flame into my my face. "You do sacrilege to the place. You forget that just below us is the verdant bank, the glassy pool, the bower of sweet words and kisses, that will be so dear in Stella's memory now that you are gone."

"You villainous hound!" he panted, and glared at with his blue eyes so fiercely that for the moment I forgot myself and stepped backward.

He laughed loudly.

"Now, you dirty coward," he said, "how much is it you want? Be quick!"

I stepped nearer and bent over him.

"How much is it I want?" I said slowly.

I felt my heart swelling with hate, and involuntarily my fingers tightened and relaxed.

"Yes, how much money?" he said. His voice was quieter now, and he was watching me closely.

"Money?" I said. "Money?" Then I stood erect and laughed. "Do you think I brought you here for money?" I saw his cheek pale as I said that. "You are mad!"

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"What do you intend doing?" he said. I saw that he was striving to remain calm and appear unconcerned.

"Look here," I answered. I removed a plank of the floor. Then I rolled him beside the opening, and he cursed me for my pains. I made him lie face downwards with his chin on the edge of the plank.

"Look down," I said, as I stooped and held the lantern through the opening. Its light glistened upon the black waters that ran silently beneath.

"Coward!" he hissed; and rolling over on his back glared up at me. I was piqued at his insolence and kicked him.

"Enough!" I said sullenly. "You are wasting time. I must get back to my bed." And I raised his feet in order to bring him parallel with the opening. But even then he fought as it were with his bound body; and opening his mouth wide he yelled with the full power of his lungs.

The place shook. I struck him over the mouth.

"Save your breath!" I said. "You will have need of plenty in a moment." And I endeavoured to force him through the hole. But his shoulders were broad and he stuck.

"Give me a chance for my life!" he said. "Let me stand upon my feet!"

I laughed.

"Give me one hand free!" he cried.

Then by sheer force, my knee upon his shoulder, I forced him through, and his body splashed heavily into the water.

He was gone. I took the lantern and peered through the opening, but only the black water as it flowed silently by could be seen. Then I replaced the plank, and for a long time sat with my thoughts.

Suddenly a crash of thunder shook the old ruin. I sprang up. A storm had been gathering, and now it broke in fury. The rain fell in a torrent and poured through the decayed roof. The vivid lightning lit every corner of the ruinous place, blinding me, and then leaving me in inky darkness; and the thunder shook the tottering walls.

Then suddenly I heard the wind come sweeping like an angry voice through the wood. This was not a safe place to remain in.

Moreover, I must get back to the village and to bed ere dawn, in order that suspicion might not be aroused. So I rushed forth and was drenched ere I reached the wood.

The wood seemed haunted, and I could not refrain from looking back. I tried to laugh away my fear; but at last I broke into a race between myself and my terror, stumbling, falling, until at length, cut and bruised and breathless, I leapt from the wood into the road.

I did not meet a soul as I hurried home. It was three o'clock, but I could not sleep. My night's work had been too much for my nerves. I plied myself with brandy, and at last, as the clouds and the dawn were breaking, I fell into a troubled slumber.

When I awoke the sun was shining. I sat up. My head seemed bursting. Then, like a flash, like the sting of a whip, came the recollection of my crime. I sprang out of bed, trembling! Perhaps already the murder had been discovered. I peered fearfully from my window. But the street was quiet. Then I reflected that no one would go near the place, not even Stella, now that he had gone away. I grew calmer and had a pull at my brandy flask.

Then the words repeated themselves in my brain. Gone away? Perhaps that thunder had brought the body to the top. In such an event I should lose no time in hurrying thither and burying it; or better still, weighting it, and sinking it in the pool. Fool that I was; I should have taken that precaution at the time. Hurriedly I dressed, and with an appearance of calm walked through the village. Once in the wood, I ran.

As I reached the stream I saw that the mill had been blown down by the violence of the storm. I beat my way through the bushes toward the pool. Then, as I parted the branches and glanced along the bank I was turned as if to stone.

The body of my victim lay upon the grass, its glassy eyes staring to the blue heaven. And over it bent a woman.

The snapping of the twigs startled her, and she raised her head.

It was Stella, the woman I loved, for whom I fancied, I had done this thing.

When she saw me she rose and burst out laughing and ran toward me. The look upon her white face froze my blood.

Good Heavens! she had gone mad.

* * * * *

I sprang up with a cry, shaking from head to foot. I was standing by the roadside, where I had come to lie in wait for him.

The clouds were gone, and above in the blue strip of heaven between the dark tops of the wood, the calm stars were gleaming.

It had been nothing but a dream, then!

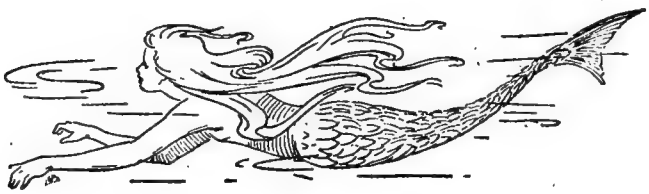
A carriage was approaching. Instinctively I shrank from the highway; but I was observed. There were four people in the carriage.

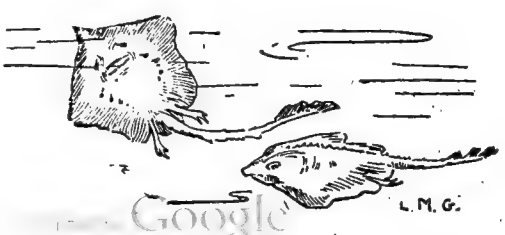
One of them, the man whom I had dreamed I had murdered, leant over and looked at me. Then he turned to the woman beside him, and in the starlight I saw the pale but happy face of Stella.

"Perhaps it's that poor fool who fancied himself in love with Stella!" I heard her father say.

Then the carriage passed, and I heard the heavy wheels turn in the sand road.

M. ARIE.





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MISTAKEN FOR A LORD.

If a Britisher wants to go abroad on a cash capital of £50 there is no law to prevent it, even if he is a newspaper man who has saved and economised for six or seven years to get that much wealth together.

When I started out with my friend Gillam, who was an artist instead of a journalist, and had £10 less capital as well, we took third class passage on a steamer and planned to do Europe on foot and avoid all extravagances.

As to how we got along until we reached Greece and a certain event happened is of no great consequence. We tramped here and there, ate, slept, and had a fairly good time.

From Athens we went on a tramp up country, viewing tombs and ruins by the way, and after putting in two days at Marathon we started out one morning for a hamlet called Histrophus.

We were first met by about a dozen dogs of all sizes, ages and colours, and each one a worse looking dog than the one who came after. After we had driven the pack off we were charged down upon by nine children of various sizes and ages, all of whom needed soap and water.

They rallied around us for small coin, and not getting any, they fell back, and gave four women a chance. We got rid of the latter to encounter three men, one of whom could speak a little English.

They were dirty, ragged villains, who did not hesitate to threaten us, and not a word could we get out of them about the ruins until we had satisfied them with *backsheesh*.

Gillam started out after a bit to do some sketching, while I found a place to take a nap, and the inhabitants of Histrophus finally got out of breath begging for coins and trying to get us to buy an old skeleton goat for ten shillings, and went back to their huts.

At the end of two hours I was awakened by someone giving me a smart kick on the hip, and I roused myself to see that we had been taken prisoners by four brigands. The fellows had come down off the mountains, about four miles away, having probably been notified by a messenger from the village.

I have many times read of the picturesque Greek brigands, but the four who gobbled us up that day must have gone out of the picturesque business some weeks previously.

They were a ragged, ugly lot, no better than the men of the village and we were far more disgusted with their breaths, than afraid of their knives.

The leader spoke English fairly well, and I have always felt grateful to him on that account. All leaders of Greek brigands should learn three or four languages before proceeding to business, as it is a great help towards an understanding about identity, money matters, and so forth.

It was the leader who had kicked me, which I have always taken as a compliment, and as I sat up he saluted me and said:

"My lord, you will please consider yourself a prisoner and come along without resistance."

"But don't make any mistake on me," I replied. "As near as I can make out from this short range you are brigands."

"I am Bobetto," he said as he laid his hand on his heart and bowed low.

"Excuse me, that I never heard of you before. You are a brigand, and your object money, and this is your band?"

"My lord is correct."

"Now about this lord business. Let us have an understanding. Who do you take me for?"

"An English lord, my lord. I have been expecting you for several days. The name I cannot pronounce, but I know you to be the gentleman. Have no fears for your safety, as it will be a case of ransom."

"This is kind of you. If you take me for an English lord, who do you take this other chap to be?"

"Your companion, sir. His name I heard, but cannot give it. He will also be held for ransom."

Then we started off to the west.

The particular retreat of this band was half-way up a mountain and consisted of two brush huts and a fire in front of them.

We were in no manner ill used. They could have

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robbed us of what little money we had, and personal property, but they did not even search us for weapons.

As soon as we had arrived at the huts, however, Bobetto brought out stationery and commanded me to write to the British Minister at Athens and obtain the sum of £5,000.

Both Gillam and I burst out laughing at this demand, and after a little I said to the leader.

"Of what use to play the fool in this matter? As I told you before, though we are Britishers we are poor men at that. We can raise about £50 apiece, but not another halfpenny, and if you take that, we shall have to turn brigands and compete with you in business."

"I don't care, but you are my lord just the same," replied Bobetto.

"You can't make anything out of us, old chap. Had you got hold of a real live lord, you might have made something, and bought a garlic factory, but we are almost down to our last copper. Sorry for you but you can't always hit it, even in the brigand business."

"But you must write," persisted the wooden-headed rascal. "You must write to the British Minister that if he does not send us £2,000 by our messenger your ears will be sent him in a package!"

I read the letter to Bobetto after it was written, and he was perfectly satisfied that it would fetch the cash in reply.

It was sent off by a messenger, who would be gone at least ten days, and then we went into "retirement," It is the rule with all brigands who have a prisoner on hand to lie low and take no chances. I thought it well to prepare this gang for a disappointment, and when the messenger had departed I told them that he would only have the journey for nothing.

"It cannot be for nothing," grimly replied Bobetto, as he brought out a knife and felt its edges. "If no money comes, then your ears go to Athens! If they fail to bring it, then we will send on your heads!"

Sentinels were posted on the hills round to prevent a surprise, and we had nothing to do but loaf about. Bobetto thought he knew the game of poker, and it was for us to undeceive him.

In three days Gillam and I had won every penny he had. We offered to put up £50 against our ears, but the brigands assured us with great dignity that it wasn't the thing.

About once a day I thought it my duty to inform Bobetto that we were moneyless Britishers and that there was nothing in it for him, and he always replied to me with a lift of the eyebrows and a shrug of the shoulders and the words:

"Time will tell, my lord; time will tell. It has happened that I have had to send ears and heads to Athens before."

For the first five days of our captivity we were closely guarded, and there could be no thought of escape. Then, as we appeared to make ourselves at home, the vigilance of the brigands was relaxed,

While only four had been concerned in our capture, there were really six in the band. One of them had a broken leg, and the other was acting as a nurse.

Two sentinels were always stationed at points half a mile away, and occasionally a brigand fell asleep during the day.

I think it was on the eighth day and at about three o'clock in the afternoon when the brigand nurse was sent for provisions.

As two were acting as sentinels and a third was lying helpless, this left only two men to deal with. One of these was Bobetto, and he sat with his back to a rock dozing, owing to the heat of the day.

Gillam was lying on his back, while I was looking carelessly at a Greek newspaper. All of a sudden the artist sat up and whispered to me:

"Let's end this here and now! You tackle the leader, and I'll go for the other fellow!"

The "other fellow" was at the fire heaping the wood together. We rose in unison and made the attack. I gave old Bobetto a kick on the jaw which knocked him over and caused doleful howls, and Gillam hit his man such a blow on the neck as to render him unconscious for half an hour.

There were two guns in camp, and we seized them and made for the highway, only a mile distant. Before departing I gave the leader a tap on the head to quiet his yells, and so far as I know we were not followed a yard.

We reached the highway just in time to get a lift in a passing cart and in a couple of hours were in Marathon.

As to the letter, it was delivered at the consulate, but was looked upon as a joke and the messenger sent off empty handed. We might have lost our ears on his return, but were not there to have them sliced off.

Bobetto died two years later, as I read in the papers, and it is said, that he was badly disfigured by a broken jaw—the one "my lord" gave him with his good, heavy walking boot.

C. B. LEWIS.

New Serial Story *Begins To-day.*

EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD.

. . By George C. Wallis . .

Author of "The Winning of Gunhild," "The Gladiator," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

The Reading of the Runes.

This is the saga of Einar Longsword, a strong man of the North, as it was told by a skald in the days before Harald Horrid-locks was called Fairhair; before he fought the kings in Hafir's Fiord, and became the first ruler of all Norway.

* * * * *

When Einar stood forth in old Sweyn's great hall and gave me his sword and battle-axe, that I, Sigmund the Skald, might read the runes engraven upon them, I felt that the inconsiderate gods had thrust upon me a thankless task, for what is at the same time easier or harder than to interfere in quarrels not one's own? I saw in the act a challenge to boastful Hardrada and old Sweyn, and the eyes of Einar, before they rested again upon those of Astrid the Beautiful, looked into mine with honest appeal. I examined the runic symbols carefully, and hesitated before I spoke.

"Do not be afraid of telling the truth, Skald," said Einar impetuously. "It may not suit some here, but neither did the edge of the long sword nor the weight of the axe suit the enemies of my father, Harald Aslison. You have told the story of his love for Gunhild, and the treachery and punishment of Turgrimm, not seldom in this very hall, but you have never yet told the meaning of the runes. Let us hear it now."

The men put down their horns of ale and leaned forward, hands on knees, to listen. Sweyn stirred uneasily in his chair; and burly Hardrada, glancing from Einar to Astrid, and then back to me, scowled evilly, and I thought I saw a start of surprise and fear with the scowl.

I was younger then, and though debarred from the acts of war by a physical weakness, my mind ran ever on deeds of daring, and I loved nothing better than to tell or hear of perilous and callous conquest. So, though I foresaw somewhat of the things that would flow from my reading, I read on. I knew Einar's parents well, and I loved him as my own son. I trusted that his great strength and noble mind would carry him with honour through whatever trouble my words or his love for Astrid might bring upon him, and as I spoke I looked scornfully at Hardrada.

"The runes are scanty, but their meaning is plain," said I, handling the weapons tenderly. "It is written on the blade, by the hand of Thrunna the armourer, that the sword came to him, by a way which he may not tell, from the Halls of Odin, from the anvil of mighty Thor himself. It came unfinished, and Thrunna put an edge upon it with more care than he had ever bestowed on blade before. When he had done he graved upon it this prophecy, which came into his mind unbidden: "Many men shall this sword slay before it be broken, many widows and orphans shall it make, and many tears before its destiny be fulfilled; and it shall win for each of its two first holders, who shall be father and son, a maiden sweet and fair." And on the battle-axe, which I know not the age of, it is written that it shall crack many heads, the heads of honest men as well as those of rogues, but that it shall itself be shivered at last in the breaking of the hardest skull that covers an ill mind in all Norseland.

I gave back the weapons to Einar as the last words left my lips, and smiled at the sneer that was on Hardrada's face. For he was reputed to have the toughest crown in the Northlands, and though he had come but yesterday, it was plain to see that he and Einar were rivals for the hand of Astrid, the only daughter of Earl Sweyn.

"'Tis a likely tale, skald, I vow," cried he, his right hand clutching his dagger; "by the blackness of Hela, a likely tale! Go tell that to the thralls and the women, but insult not men's ears with it."

"You may please yourself whether you believe me or not, Hardrada Hard-skull," said I. "Sigmund the Skald has friends here who know that his tongue is not given to lying, and who will not hear him defamed."

The burly man's cheeks went dull red under the taunt of the nickname that was not often spoken in his hearing, and the torrent of his smouldering passion burst out fiercely. His sword sprang from its sheath, and, brandishing it menacingly, he strode towards me.

"I call upon you, friend Sweyn," he cried to the old Earl, "to bid this insolent skald and this upstart Einar out of your house. It is common talk amongst all men, even amongst the thralls in the garth, I have heard, that Einar comes here but to make love to Astrid under your very nose—to Astrid, whom you promised to me last year for the great service I did you once, and the friendship that is between us. And now he brings a singer of sagas, a reader of runes to his aid, and thinks to hit me where I have no chance of defence. Bid them out of your house, or by the Hammer of Thor I will drive them out at the sword's point!"

I sat silent whilst he raved out this speech, but before he had done Einar was on his feet, his eyes flashing, the famous longsword in his hand. And before Sweyn could speak, it flashed up and caught Hardrada's sidewise, and sent it spinning over the heads of the women.

"Thus I answer your accusations, Hard-skull," said Einar, "though it is true that I love Astrid, and also that I shall win her for my own in spite of you. Now get your sword again, and we will go holmgang* here and now, where you cannot get behind me, like the bullying *nithing* that you are, and we will test the truth of the skald's reading."

For all answer Hardrada seized his battle-axe from the hands of his man Alfdane and ran furiously towards Einar, who rushed in upon him with upraised blade. In another moment the two would have been engaged in a death struggle, but Sweyn's voice rose above the tumult of exclamation, and men sprang forward to do his bidding.

* Holmgang, single combat, generally fought on small islands in the fiord's.

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"Cease!" cried the old Earl. "You are both my guests, and I cannot have your blood upon my floor. Hold them asunder, men, while their passion cools."

Strong arms round both drew them back and so held them, panting and glaring, until the Earl spoke again.

"If you must needs fight, Hardrada," he said, "at least let it not be until you are sure that Astrid would have you with Einar's blood on your hands. If you are jealous of this stalwart youth, whom I should look upon with favour but for the promise I made you, leave the matter to me. I am old and have seen much, Hardrada, and I tell you that there may be more in the skald's words than you think. Nay, even in spite of my promise, I will give Einar my daughter within a year from now, on one condition."

"Then you are no longer a friend of mine, Sweyn," said Hard-skull, morosely, as, released from the arms of the men, he put down his axe and leaned against the wall.

"You will say so no longer," said the old man with a grim smile, "when I tell you that condition. Einar shall wed my daughter Astrid, if she be willing, if he can capture the ship of Edred the Bearsark—the *Destroyer* herself—within a year from now. In proof thereof he must, within the year, bring me the ship here to Raven's-nest."

A silence fell upon them all at that, and tears started to Astrid's eyes, and a smile crept over Hardrada's flushed face. Edred the Bearsark was accounted, when in anger, the strongest man alive, and his ship was the largest and swiftest afloat. He scoured the seas as an evil spirit, preying alike upon innocent fishermen and upon ships heavy laden from Viking cruises, and though the hands of all were against him, he had yet escaped scatheless.

At first I feared for Einar, knowing his rashness, but when I saw his lips close firmly and the fire of a great resolve glow in his eyes, and noted how calmly he took the challenge, I was relieved. I remembered how his father, Harald, had won the wings in slaying the sea-wolf Valstran, and I doubted not the ability of the son, who wore the golden wings already, to do greater deeds.

"I agree to the condition," he said, sheathing his sword, and striding up to where Sweyn sat, the sunlight from the open doorway glinting on his mail and limning in golden relief the noble outlines of his stalwart form. "I vow before you, Sweyn, by all the Gods of Asgard, that I will not ask you for Astrid until I bring the *Destroyer*, as my own ship, up the fiord. And since Hardrada is your friend, he shall be safe from my anger henceforth unless he cross my path with malice. Need a man and a Viking say more, Earl Sweyn? Let us clasp hands in amity, and with to-morrow's dawn the *Eagle* sails."

Sweyn extended his hand to meet that of the brave young Norseman, as he could not help after so manly and forbearing a speech, and after they had grasped warmly, and he had bidden farewell to Astrid and to her mother Alfifa, Einar went proudly towards the doorway and passed through, and so down to the water-side, where his ship lay.

Algar and Brun, his two chief men, followed him, and the rest of us rose from the feast table so that the women might clear away the empty dishes. And I noticed that Astrid's tears had dried quickly, that she went about her household duties cheerfully, with seemingly never a care for the greedy gaze of Hardrada, which followed her everywhere. I made no doubt that she and Einar had already told each other the story of their love, and that, like a true Norse maiden, she believed Einar would do whatever he dared for her sake. And later in the day, while Hardrada was without, I sang thus to the maid:

Comes to the Yule feast,
Comes to stern Sweyn's house,
Hardrada the Hard-skull:
Seeking a love maid,
Seeking Sweyn's daughter,
Astrid the Beautiful.
'But Astrid loves Einar,'
Birds in the bushes sing.
Rats in the thatching squeak:
'Go back to Tvedestrof,
Hard-skull Hardrada!'

She blushed prettily at that, and those around us who caught the words laughed loud and long, and praised my wit.

Yet when all slept that night at Raven's-nest, I lay awake, restless, and thinking of Einar. So restless I was that when the first faint glow of the dawn crept from the portals of the east I rose and put on my laced sandals, and went out quietly into the morning.

I was not the first, however. It was near the cold season, and the lady-ferns in the hollows had turned to vivid red in the breath of the keen winds; but they were not half so red as the cheeks of fair Astrid when I overtook her in the home path beyond the garth, where the valley slopes down to the gravel shores of the lake on which the ships lay silent in the grey shadow of the cliff.

At another time I should have rejoiced in the beauty of the dawn; in the red-glow on the hill-tops, with patches of blue where the gentians clustered; in the sweet scent of the pink and white herbage of the vales; in the pearly glitter of the dewdrops on the spider-webbing of hemlock bough, spruce twig, and raspberry bush; in the wheeling and crying of the kestrels and buzzards on the crags yonder, where the lake narrows to a river between stupendous sides;

Leaning over the side he kissed his love before my eyes.

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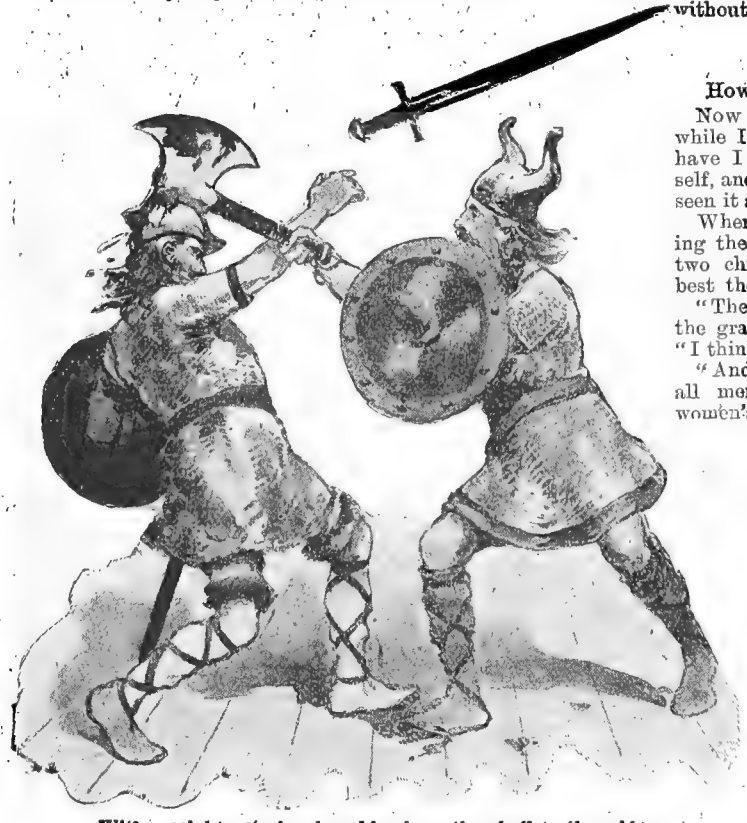
and when the sun at last arose, in the splendour of the golden rays running through the mesh of the meadow vapour; but now I heeded these things little.

Astrid, guilty Astrid, claimed all my gaze, as with ruddy cheeks, downcast eyes, and meek voice, the loose curls of her sunny hair flying out on the cool breeze like a glorious flame, she asked if I, too, were minded to bid Einar a last good-bye?

"Since you have confessed your errand, fair one," said I, marvelling not at Einar's determination nor at Hardrada's desire, "since you have told me why you are out so early, why, that was my intent. And since we are both of one resolve, we will go together. I will not stay too long."



With a mighty stroke clove him from the skull to the middle.

"You had ever a kindly heart, Sigmund," she said, and her merry laugh, that startled a whistling stint in a bush near by, was good to hear.

A white osprey, omen of good luck, circled high overhead as we went to the water's edge; and as though he knew of our coming, a boat lay beached on the margin, and Einar stood near it, alone.

I drew back then, and wandered a little way off along a birch coppice, until such time as I judged they had said farewell a sufficient number of times, and then I joined them. Their faces were bright and happy, though in Astrid's eyes glistened tears, and in Einar's was a shade of foreboding, and I thought that never had twain been so fitly put together by Baldar's hand.

The sun was fast getting up now, and I judged that we must be going back; so, after some words of warning and advice to Einar and a hearty clasp of hands, he stepped into the boat. Leaning over the side, he kissed his love before my eyes, and then, with a quick thrust of the red pine oars, pushed off into floating water.

We stood and watched the regular strokes of the blades as they broke the purple mirror of the lake's surface, and admired the action of his bare, muscular arms; saw him reach and board the ship, and the sailors let out the sails and put her before the wind. Until the lower cliffs hid her from sight we watched, then turned back towards the homestead.

As we went, I saw Alfdane, Hardrada's man, slinking behind a wall, and my mind misgave me, for I knew him to be the son of one of Valstran's men, whom Einar's father had slain. It was plain that he had spied upon us and thought himself undiscovered. But I said nothing of it to Astrid, and when we came to the house, all greeted us without suspicion.

CHAPTER II.

How Einar Rescued Othnar Wolf's-fang.

Now my story must of need go on with Einar while I stayed at home at Raven's-nest, but so often have I heard the tale from the lips of Einar himself, and others, that I can tell it as though I had seen it all with my own eyes.

When the *Eagle* was clear of the fiord, and threading the channels between the islands, Einar and his two chief men took counsel together as to how best they might come at Edred and overmaster him.

"There will be men's work to do when we throw the grapnel chains on the *Destroyer*," said Algar. "I think you did ill to dare such a task."

"And so think I," said Brun the Silent; "but all men must needs be guided to Valhalla by women's hands."

It was said of this Brun that he had never had a mother, so little he cared for women.

"Useless talk," said Einar. "We are already on the viking path, let it lead us where it will. As the Normas decree* so shall things happen."

"Then, since you are set on this," said Algar, "this is my rede: that we lie about the islands a week or more, until we hear tidings of the Bearsark, and that we attack him directly after he has done one of his red deeds, when he will be somewhat short of men and unfit for fight."

"It is a good saying, Algar," said Einar. "He is an outlaw, and no man can tell it to our discredit that we took him unfairly. But whom have we here?"

The men rushed to the bow of the *Eagle* and looked eagerly, for the galley had just rounded the sharp corner of Barenose Point, and in the quiet water behind it three ships were locked together, and their decks were bright with the waving of axes and swords, and there was a great shouting.

"Methinks there are some yonder who are getting their bane," quoth Algar, "and by their voices there are some we know. That was old Wolf's-fang's war-cry, I vow, and that was his man Ogen."

"It is Othnar Wolf's-fang's ship, truly," said Brun, "and he seems in dire peril."

"Then little as I like, now, we must go to help him," said Einar. "It shall never be said that we let a neighbour of Sweyn's die for want of our arms. And it is a nithing's deed to attack one ship with two. Hasten, men, here is plenty of practise for our skill, and they are pressing our friends hard."

The sturdy vikings sent the *Eagle* plunging swiftly through the clear water, raising a curl of creamy froth before her prow, and as she crashed into the side of the

* Note.—The Normas were the three Fates of the Norse mythology.

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nearmost galley, Einar leapt aboard her with upraised blade, Algar and Brun followed him, and others made the ships fast.

The men of Thorod, a viking whom men named the Unforgiving, who had waylain Othnar because of an old blood feud, gave back in confusion before the onset of Einar. Never was sword in Norseland so keen as Longsword; never was sword that shone so blue and vivid before men's eyes. It dazzled them as it flashed in the sun, and when the glare left their eyes they were stretched in death. Algar and Brun, with their heavy axes, came labouring behind, guarding his back, and so Einar soon won through the press to Othnar's side.

"You come none too soon, Einar Longsword," said he, sweeping down an enemy with his huge axe as he spoke. "Thorod's men are too many for us, and but for help we should have been mounting Bifrost's rainbow bridge to-night. How came you here?"

"Deeds first—talk after," said Einar, plying Longsword on the foe. "Let us get this work done as soon as may be. Here comes Thorod, mad as a Bearsark; see to him."

The fight was renewed in deadly earnest. The crews of Einar and Othnar together were greater than the crews of Thorod, but the latter were brave men, and desperate, and for awhile the fray held even. Many champions were sent to Odin before it was seen that the men of the north were winning, and still Thorod's vikings strove on. Algar slew Verg and Audun, and Brun sent Ragnor Keen-eyes to Valhalla, and Thorfin, Thorod's son, wounded Algar almost to the death before Einar could stay him.

It went hard with Thorfin when Longsword shone between his eyes, and his father saw him fall just as he reeled from the strokes of Othnar's ruddy axe. The sight put new life into Thorod's weary arms. He set upon Othnar desperately, raining his blows so fast and furious that Wolf's-fang gave way, and at last was driven to put his shoulders to the mast, finding it all his work to defend himself.

Now men stayed their hands to watch them, and Othnar cried, between the cautious sweeps of his heavy weapon:

"My life against this red-hand's, for the liegeship of you all!"

Thorod the Unforgiving glared assent as he wielded his blade, and there was silence, save for the clashing of steel between those two. At last Othnar gained the advantage and drove Thorod before him, but just as his axe was lifted for the ending blow, one of Thorod's men kicked a sword in his path, Othnar's right foot was caught by its sharp edge, the blood spurted suddenly from the wound, and as he fell headlong to the deck the axe slipped from his grasp.

"A coward's deed!" cried many, and Einar sprang forward before Thorod could close with his fallen enemy, and dealt him a blow under the ear that sent him staggering half-way across the ship. The blow saved Othnar's life. Before his foe could recover himself Wolf's-fang held his axe again and was upon him, and with a mighty stroke that all marvelled at, clove him from the skull to the middle, through helm and byrnie and mail.

A great cry rose from Thorod's men at that, and some were for striving on and some were for going over to Othnar's service because of the right of combat. They could not agree amongst themselves, but Einar, who had somewhat of a lawman's tongue, gave them good counsel.

"You are Othnar's men now, by right of conquest," said he, "but I doubt not that he will give you your choice, either to follow him or to turn about in peace and go your own way. It is ill to keep men who might turn traitors. If you will not listen to this, and are set on more slaying, why, here are some of us ready to show you how."

To this advice Wolf's-fang readily consented, being scarcely able to walk now for the pain in his foot, and the end of it was that about forty men chose to serve under him, and the rest took the grappling chains from their battered ships and made sail southwards, though some of these, because of the slaying of Thorfin, threatened vengeance on Einar and his crew.

It was growing dusk when their dragons vanished into the blue immensity of ocean, and Einar stayed with Wolf's-fang until the next morning, hearing all the news that Othnar's men could remember of the southern waters, and particularly of Edred's doings. But when Othnar heard of Einar's intention he sat thoughtfully silent awhile, stroking his beard. Then a smile crept over his face.

"It was like Sweyn, if he yet be as I remember him," said Othnar, "to set you such a task, and foolish of you to accept it, but since what is done is done, we must take counsel of Loki. This Edred is outlawed, and therefore cannot be met on equal terms. A year is a long time, and if you cruise about the coasts carefully and keep your ears open you will not have to wait many weeks for some red deed of his. Then, when his crew are tired, and before the wounded have time to get well, will be your chance to fall upon him unawares. And if it happens that I am within call, then I shall be glad to give my help."

They came together, whitelaxed with snow

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"The first part of your advice is like Algar's, and suits me," said Einar, "but as to the last, it cannot be. I must do this deed alone with my own men."

"As you will," said Othnar, "but you will some day find my rede a good one."

And then he grew serious again, and while Einar's men made the *Eagle* ready for sail, looked first at Longsword and then out across the sea as though wishing to speak yet not knowing how to find words. At last he cast hesitation to the wind and said:

"It is strange that Hardrada should have shown face at Raven's-nest if the rumour that I heard at Sogn be true. But perchance he has been so long in Iceland that he has forgotten you. He must have bound his men over to silence when he found out your parentage and your friendship at Sweyn's house. I fancy that if he be there when I sit down at Sweyn's table he will not stay long."

"No man's will I be but his."

"What was the rumour?" asked Einar. "I know not why he should be an enemy of mine, excepting for Astrid's sake."

"It was told me at Sogn," said Othnar, "that Hardrada was the brother of that Turgrimm whom your father slew at Nidaros, and that he had long bided his time to pay the debt. They said that he had put in at North-hold with his galley prepared for war, but whether he won the fight or was beaten off was not known. He is alive, you say."

Einar's face grew pale, then dark with fierce anger. Algar and Brun felt the edges of their polished axes.

"He is alive, but only until I can get within spear's throw of him," said Einar. "If the rumour that he put in at North-hold be true, his life is forfeit to me because he would never have escaped my father Harald, had he not succeeded too well. Be speedy with the ship men; we shall not need to go so far for more fighting after all."

"Where to now?" asked Wolf's-fang.

"Where to but back to Raven's-nest, to drag that wretch's carcase out of the house," said Einar sternly.

"Now I have seen much," said Othnar, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder and looking earnestly into his eyes, "and I advise you three things. First, that you go to North-hold yourself and see if this tale be true; next, that you find Edred and fulfil your vow, whatever you discover at home; and last, if vengeance be necessary, to take it. In the meantime, when my foot is cured, which a few days' rest here will do, I will go up to Raven's-nest myself—'tis years since I saw Sweyn—and spoil that nest for at least one of the birds sitting there. Now sail north or south as you will."

"'Tis sound advice, but goes ill with one hot for action," said Einar after a moment's pause. "Nevertheless, I will do as you say. My wrath will not cool in a day. But since I am going by your word, Othnar Wolf's-fang, I claim your help if I should need it."

"That you shall have, friend Einar, and though I am growing sere, as you saw yesterday, I can still show some the way to Valhalla," said Othnar.

Then Einar went on board the *Eagle* and put his hand upon the tiller, and the shield-hung galley sailed out of the shadow of the island cliffs into the glare of the open sea.

CHAPTER III.

What Befell at Raven's-nest.

It was quiet at Raven's-nest after Einar had sailed; and I think Alfifa, Sweyn's wife, upbraided her husband sorely for having sent Astrid's lover to his death. At first he listened to her, but in a day or so he listened to Hardrada instead, remembering his promise, for Sweyn was a great stickler for his word.

"If Einar be of the muscle I take him to be," said he to me, "he will do what I set him to do. If not, he will die nobly, and the Valkyrs will have but chosen him some few years sooner. What say you, Sigmund?"

"You could not have spoken better," said I, looking at Astrid meaningly. Hardrada caught the glance from across the hall, and it set him thinking. It was nearly a week since Einar's going, and he had made no progress in his wooing of Astrid. She used every artifice known to women—and there are not few—to avoid his presence and his flatteries, and in this was well aided by Alfifa, and Hardrada grew desperate. Moreover, he dreaded the news of what he had done at North-hold getting afloat, for he found that the people of Harald and Sweyn were great friends. So one day, after speaking long with Sweyn, he caught Astrid alone.

He came upon her one evening when the snow was falling fast, and she had no excuse, but must return home with him. And withal he was so long and awkward in the telling of

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his love, when he at last plucked up courage to speak of it, that Astrid laughed in his face and bade him go make such an offer of wedlock to the old carline, Helga, who had sat beside the ingle in her father's hall ever since she could remember.

Hard-skull was angered at her light insolence, for he thought his wealth and her father's wish would have carried weight now Einar was away, and instead of continuing his suit, he lost his temper.

"You are a silly girl," said he, "and Tyr will be lenient if your perverseness does not bring you to trouble. You need not keep Einar in your head, for his you will never be."

"His I shall be, or no other man's," said Astrid bravely. "And as to you, Hard-skull, I think no more of you than I do of my father's meanest servant."

They walked the rest of the way without speaking, and came together, whiteflaked with snow, into the hall. I saw the glower on Hardrada's face, and I knew that he had been rebuffed, and I laughed to myself.

Nothing of note was said that night, but next morning, after a long talk with his man, Alfdane—who was reputed to be a wereman, and was disliked by all of us—Hardrada rose from the feast-table and called his men to go her, saying that it was time they were gone. No one bade them linger, though Sweyn stared astonished, and so they went down to the *Vulture* and put off.

We saw them out of sight round the lower cliffs and were turning away, when the peak sails of another ship shone white against the clear blue of the sky. We heard the echo of their passing greeting ring along the crags, and when the fresh vessel came nearer we saw that it was the *Long Dragon* of Othnar Wolf's-fang.

A great welcome was made ready at once, for Othnar, of Trollfell—which was the nearest garth to Raven's-nest—was a good neighbour, albeit he did not visit us too often. He was a great, heavy-jawed man, with one huge tooth outgrown on the left side of his mouth (which had got him his name), and an abundance of iron-grey hair, and I noticed that he limped as he stepped to shore, and looked marvellously chagrined.

And the look of chagrin was still on his face when he sat to meat, so that Sweyn bade him out with what was troubling him.

"Have you come to seek men to aid you in a quarrel?" asked the stern Earl. "We have men here, and to spare, for any wild work that may want doing."

"Nay," said Othnar, resting his eyes on Alfifa and Astrid, "I have come for no men, for I have plenty, but methinks had I come for fair women I need go no further. Nay, Sweyn, I was but put out because I came too late. You had a guest last night. By Tyr, I would have liked to have speech with him before you!"

"And what do you know of Hardrada Hard-skull?" one asked.

"I know much," said Othnar, and told us how he had met Einar and what he had heard of Hardrada's doings.

At the news of Einar there went up a shout of applause that shook the dust from the seasoned rafters, but at the other story there were silent lips and stern faces. To us Othnar told it as a truth and not as a rumour, saying that he had it direct from a thrall of Harald's, who had escaped to Sogn.

When the tale was done we sat awhile, looking at each other, for surely there would be much blood come of such a foul deed, and no man knew where it would end. Then old Sweyn raised his hand aloft and vowed by Odin that henceforth Hardrada should be no friend of his.

"I will bid the farm men drive him out with sticks comes he here again," said the stern Earl. "For his silence I consider my promise to him revoked. He shall wed no daughter of mine and thine, Alfifa."

"Spoken like a man, Sweyn!" cried Othnar, made garrulous by the ale. "Thy fair Astrid is too fair for an ordinary man, still less a nithing and a woman-killer. Indeed, thy Astrid is very fair, and I begrudge even Einar."

At this some laughed, but Astrid, though smiling at her father's words, blushed and went out.

This was Othnar's weakness, that he was overfond of fair faces and unstable in his desires; and I said to myself that Einar was rid of one rival but to have another, and one more likely to be troublesome.

The snow came thickly the following few days, and most of us kept to the house, roasting ourselves before the great log fire that cast a red glare into all the corners of the hall.

For my part, I was kept busy telling all the sagas that I knew until my throat was so hoarse that I was glad when the downfall ceased, and the men took wrestling shoes and went out to exercise their muscles in the bright, bracing air. But ever as I told my stories I kept an eye upon Othnar Wolf's-fang, and I saw that day by day the desire for Astrid was getting stronger mastery over him.

I saw, too, that Sweyn the Stern took kindly to him, and that even Alfifa did not treat him so distantly as she had treated Hardrada.

Othnar was wealthy and a generous man, who had done no unusually red deeds, and, but for the great tooth that grew out of his jaw, a man of fine presence. And when, at the after-Yule feast, the Earl promised Astrid to him if Einar did not return successful within the year, he went about as a man upon whom Bragi, god of leasure, smiled.

His infatuation outran his patience, and on the last day of his visit, having made all ready to go over Saddleback Ridge to his own garth at Trollfell—some of his men having already sailed in the *Long Dragon*—he sought Astrid alone and told her his desire.

Astrid listened silently, for he was a better suitor than Hard-skull, and spoke more smoothly, perchance because he knew more of such things than most men, but when he had finished, her answer was the same.

"I am not disdainful of the honour you would give me, neighbour," said she, proudly, "but I hold it even a greater honour that Einar Longsword has spoken love words to me. No man's will I be but his, whether he be living or dead at the year's end. Rather will I leave my father's house and go forth as a *vala*, and put from me all thoughts of men, than be untrue to Einar. But Einar will come back victorious, never fear, Othnar; and for the service he did you you will welcome him and say no more of this."

Now she spoke so sweetly, and her golden hair shone so glorious in the flashing of the northern lights across the snow, that Wolf's-fang's desire grew greater, and he was blinded to his true duty.

"I care not what service the young cub may have rendered me," he cried, seizing the girl's hands in a strong grasp, "he is an enemy of mine so long as you love him. And think not that he is proof against sword and axe, foolish one. There was a were-woman on the island where I stayed to heal the wound in my foot, and I asked her concerning his quest. She consulted her trolls, and replied that though she could not see to the end, she saw him pass through much fighting and storm, and at last fall, a captive, into Hardrada's hands. And that, surely, will be the end. So think no more of him, Astrid, but of me. And before I go, sweet——"

He drew her swiftly towards him, seeking to kiss her, but she wrenched her right hand free and dealt him such a stinging stroke across the face that he let her go, and the blood rushed redly under his tanned skin.

"You are a fury after all," said he, carried away by mortification and passion, because just then I approached; "and now you have done Einar an evil turn indeed. I give you good-day, Astrid, until the year be out. And to you good-day also, Sigmund, the eavesdropper."

(To be continued.)

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "A Maori Maid," by Harry B. Vogel, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. E. Long, 17 Grey Rock Street, Liverpool. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT BIRDS, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, June 25th, Post-cards only, please.

Then They All Laughed.

In the court-house a tramp stood charged with stealing a watch.

He stoutly denied the impeachment, and brought a counter accusation against his accuser for assault committed with a frying-pan.

The judge was inclined to take a common sense view of the case, and, regarding the prisoner, said:

"Why did you allow the prosecutor, who is a smaller man than yourself, to assault you without resistance? Had you nothing in your hand to defend yourself?"

"Bedad, your honour," answered the tramp, "I had his watch, but what was that against a fryin'-pan?"

E. L.

The X-Rays.

"I'd take it as a charity, mum," exclaimed a tramp; "just a slice of bread and a drink of water from a milky bowl."

"Well, just lie down till I see if you are hungry," said the lady of the house. "I will take a picture of what you've had for dinner before I give you anything."

"I'se heard tell of dese X-rays, mum," returned the tramp. "I'll own up to have had a chicken for dinner. But, mum, does yer believe that they could git a good nuff likeness of the chicken to enable the owner ter recognise 'im?"

P. G.

No Change this Time.

A gentleman, while walking with two ladies through one of the principal streets of London, saw a beggar approach.

One of the ladies, who had evidently seen the mendicant before, said:

"This is the most singular man I ever heard of. No matter how much money you give him he always returns the change, and never keeps more than a penny."

"Why, what a fool he must be," remarked the gentleman. "But I'll try him, and put him to a little trouble."

So saying, the gentleman pulled from his pocket a sovereign, which he dropped into the beggar's hat.

The mendicant turned the coin over two or three times, examined it closely, and then, raising his eyes to the countenance of the benevolent man, said:

"Well, I'll not adhere to my usual custom in this case. I'll keep it all for luck, but don't do it again."

The donor opened his eyes in astonishment and passed on, while the ladies smiled with delight. M. E. R.

Not What She Expected.

"Don't you know it is against the law to beg for money?" said the lady to the tramp at the back door.

"I wasn't goin' to beg for money, ma'am," was the reply of the humble wanderer.

"It's just as bad to beg for bread."

"I wasn't goin' to beg for bread, ma'am."

"What were you going to beg for then, pray?"

"Only for one of your photographs, ma'am!"

E. C.

He Gave Him a Tip.

A Yorkshire tradesman was one day busy at his desk when a poor, broken-down looking man came and asked for relief.

The tradesman refused him, and ordered him out of the place.

The tramp, however, persisted, saying that for sixpence he would tell him something which might some day be of great value to him.

Thinking the man might know something which it would pay him to know, he gave the man the sixpence.

The tramp looked round to see that no one was within hearing, then whispered in his ear:

"If iver tha' gets i' gaol, an' 'as to tread th' mill, tak' th' side nearest to t' wall. I've tried it mesel', an' tha'll find it th' easiest."

"I Thowt I Felt a Hop."

A tramp went into a public-house one day and asked for a mug of beer in a great hurry, saying that he was so dry he thowt he could drink a gallon.

The publican told him that if he would drink it at one draught, without taking the measure away from his lips, he should have it for nothing.

"Agraid," said Pat, "and, be the howly Saint Pathrick, I'll do that same."

The landlord then drew a big measure of ale, and, slyly slipping a red herring into the measure, handed it to him.

Pat eagerly raised it to his mouth, and drank away until the measure had been elevated almost perpendicular.

The publican's eyes followed the motion in astonishment, and, looking in it, he exclaimed, shaking the froth out:

"Pat, didn't you feel anything going down with the beer when you drank it?"

"Be the powers," said Pat, "I thowt I felt a hop, sur!"

M. E.

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Misconstrued her Action.

Strolling down a country lane one hot afternoon a spinster of unprepossessing appearance observed a tramp asleep on the ground, with his bare head exposed to the full glare of the tropical sun.

"Poor fellow, he will have a sunstroke," she murmured compassionately. "I will shade him with my parasol, and sit on this stile till he wakes up."

She placed the parasol in such a position that it completely hid the tramp's shock head, and stuck patiently on the stile for quite an hour. At the expiration of that time some cattle came past, and their lowing awoke the tramp, who pushed aside the parasol and stared sleepily at the spinster.

"I say, mum," he growled, "hadn't yer better hide behind this thingumgig yerself? The cows are used to my face, but they're pretty sure to shy at yours!"

R. A. H. G.

Turning the Tables.

In Coventry a few weeks ago a poorly-clad tramp entered a shop and asked the miserly shopkeeper if he could assist him.

The master, wishing to play a practical joke upon an acquaintance who was admiring some goods at the other end of the shop, said to the tramp:

"Ask that gentleman, he's the master."

The beggar immediately turned to him and said:

"Please, sir, could you help a poor man who is weak and hungry for want of food?"

The gentleman, who had overheard the shopkeeper's allusion to himself, turned to the poor man and said:

"Are you really hungry?"

"I am, indeed, sir," answered the man, with tears in his eyes.

Much to the astonishment of the shopkeeper, the gentleman went round the counter, took a florin from the till, and handing it to the beggar, he told him to go and buy a dinner; then, turning to the shopkeeper, who had suddenly become speechless, he said:

"Thank you, my friend. I did not know before that I owned a shop," and calmly walked from the place.

F. W. F.

The Professor's Chickens.

This may not be new, but it was new to the writer who overheard it recently, so it is likely that there are others to whom it will be fresh. The young man who told it was evidently a collegian, as was his companion.

"I heard a good one about Prof. M.," he said.

"What was it?" queried the other.

"Well, you know he was married during the winter and went to housekeeping just outside the village. This spring he thought he would add a few hens to his stock; he already had a dog. He set a couple of the hens, and in time had two large broods of chickens. He was very proud of them, but in a week or so the chickens began to die. He called in a neighbour to look at them and offer advice. They were certainly a pretty scaly lot of chickens that the neighbour viewed. They were skinny-looking and apparently without ambition.

"'What do you feed them on?' asked the neighbour, after a brief survey.

"'Feed them?' responded the professor, as though he didn't hear aright. 'Why, I don't feed them on anything. I thought the old hens had milk enough for them.'"

H. M.

A Cute Tramp.

A tramp passing through a village and having a bad threepenny-piece in his pocket, entered a small shop and asked for a threepenny cigar, for which he tendered the spurious coin.

Asking for a match he lighted the cigar at the counter and marched off.

Hardly had he gone when the proprietress discovered that the coin was bad, and, running to the door and holding up the coin, she cried:

"Hey, man, come back; it's a bad one."

"Yes, I know it is," was the cool reply, "but seeing it's lighted, I'll smoke it now, if it kills me."

F. F.

Both Boys and Elephant Fooled.

Thirty years ago one of the famous elephants that travelled in this country was Jumbo. During one of his summer trips through the provinces, he stopped at the town of Bradford. In the neighbouring town of Leeds, a boy familiarly called "Dave," and notorious for leadership in all kinds of mischievous tricks, determined to show off before the other boys at Jumbo's expense, and invited several of his companions to go with him.

Having come to the elephant's stable, Dave gave him first some sweets, and then cake, and finally cried; "Now, boys," and slipped a piece of tobacco into his proboscis, intending to get out of danger and enjoy Jumbo's disgust and anger.

But before he could move, Jumbo seized him and whirled him upward through the opening overhead against the roof of the stable.

Unhurt by his unexpected "rise," Dave dropped on to a haystack. The other boys below, supposing this to be the "trick" promised them, cried out in admiration.

"Dave, Dave, do that again!"

Dave, comfortably seated out of harm's way, earnestly answered:

"No, boys! I only do that trick once a day!"

Not a Servant After All.

Housekeeper (to pleasant-faced girl at employment agency): "Have you any objection to the country?"

Girl (politely): "None at all, madam."

Housekeeper: "I have a large family."

Girl: "The more the merrier."

Housekeeper: "Seven children, two of them quite young."

Girl: "I love little children."

Housekeeper: "It will be necessary for you to bake bread, wash, and get the meals. I attend to the pastry and chamberwork myself.

Girl: "I will also make the pastry and do the rest, if you will allow me."

Housekeeper: "I cannot give you more than three afternoons off."

Girl: "Two will be sufficient—perhaps more than I will want—as my plan is to give strict attention to my household duties, and thus get the work done up promptly every day so as to have plenty of opportunities to rest between times."

Housekeeper: "I am delighted——"

Stranger (suddenly entering): "Sorry to interrupt you, madam, but you are conversing with one of my patients who has just escaped from the Hopelessly Incurable Lunatic Asylum."

L. V.

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Beauty and the Sage.

THE Sage ran his fingers through his hair until it stood on end, and endowed him with a positive air of aggression entirely foreign to his usual appearance.

Having performed which act, he allowed his eyes to wander round the portion of his household goods contained in his study, in a vague sort of hope that they would inspire him with an outlet to the quandary in which he found himself.

The stern-looking old bureau, upon which his eyes first alighted, utterly repudiated any responsibility in the matter. In fact, it seemed to take a malicious delight in adding to his dilemma by drawing attention to the heterogenous litter of paper, bottles, cigars, and other things which covered its dignified top. Table and chairs told the same tale of muddle.

Somehow everything in the Sage's room seemed to have developed a faculty for getting where it ought not to have been. At least, he put it to himself in that light to quell the pricking of his awakening conscience which began to whisper that it was afraid he was an untidy man.

He picked up the letter which had started this train of reasoning, and, smoothing out the creases ,re-read it, repeating the words slowly as though to fix them firmly in his mind.

"DEAR GUARDIAN,—I am inclosing my father's letter to you, and, if you will have me, I will try to give as little trouble as possible.

"Your affectionate ward,

"GLADYS LUSHINGTON."

The inclosure the writer referred to, was from an old friend of younger days who had played the part of David to Professor Welford's Jonathan. They had drifted apart for nearly twenty years before, because a lucrative appointment was offered to George Lushington in the Congo Free State. He had married a Belgian lady there, who presented him with a daughter, and shortly afterwards died.

All this the Sage had learnt by letter, for the old time friends had never met since their first parting.

Now by the inclosure the Sage heard that George Lushington was to head an expedition with the object of dragging from the heart of Central Africa some of its many secrets, and as it was not fit that his daughter should remain in a half savage town unprotected, he suggested that she should come and look after his old friend, bringing a sufficient sum of money to share the household expenses.

"If she makes you half as loving a ward as she has me a daughter, you will be a happy man, my dear Welford," concluded Lushington's letter. The partiality of a father evidently leading the writer to suppose that he was conferring a benefit rather than receiving one.

"It is most annoying," remarked the professor continuing his cogitations. "I know she will be possessed by the demon of clearing up. They all are. They cannot help it. It's an integral part of their nature. A girl of twelve can no more see an article put down in one place without an overwhelming desire seizing her to transfer it to another, than a small boy can resist the invitation of a particularly bright bell knob and plate which begs him to 'knock also.'

"The unfortunate part of the business is that whereas the desire to substitute 'He who *rings* and runs away, will live to *ring* another day,' for the old couplet, as generally read, dies whilst the boy is yet very young, (usually at about twenty-one) the epidemic of cleaning up gets stronger as the girl grows to womanhood."

I may here say that though the Sage's knowledge of young men was extensive and peculiar owing to the vagaries of the students who sat under him, he knew

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about as much of women, young or old, as a crocodile does of hair-pins.

A brilliant idea suddenly struck the Sage.

"Why, of course she cannot come here," he said to himself, "it would offend the proprieties. Why, I am only forty. Let me see—yes—forty-five! Altogether too young a man to act as a parent to a girl of twenty!"

Fired with an admiration for Mrs. Grundy which was none the less intense because so suddenly conceived, the Sage rose from his chair to pace up and down, whilst he mentally composed a letter to his old friend which would, whilst stating his scruples, yet not give cause for offence.

He gleefully whistled as he strode to and fro, until suddenly he caught a reflection of himself in the pier glass above the mantelpiece, and stopped short, with the chuckle which had been trembling on his lips frozen into a groan.

It was many years since the Sage had really inspected his personal appearance. His visits to the looking-glass had been confined to those rare intervals when he got a hair or some other foreign substance in his eye, and one's feelings at such a moment are not conducive to a close inspection of anything but the injured member.

The Sage contemplated the many grey patches which stained his head, and gave up counting the wrinkles after he had disposed of twelve. Then turned away dejectedly and inwardly muttered:

"No, that bird will not fly. I may not feel old enough to accept the responsibility of a grown-up daughter; but I look sufficiently ancient to be the father of six."

So the plea of youth was never entered, and the Sage found no other.

He could not truthfully say he had no room for her, because he lived in a large house he had inherited from a relative, and the only occupants beside himself were the old married couple who attended to his simple wants.

He had ample means for two; besides her father especially mentioned that she would be no source of expense to him. No, there was nothing for it. She must come; and, after all, the Sage felt that it would be very sad for this young girl to arrive in England with nobody to welcome or look after her.

In reality, the Sage had a very tender heart, so the letter that eventually went to George Lushington was one which promised to do all in his power to make Gladys happy during her stay with him.

Having dispatched this, he determined to mend his ways as regards neatness, commencing his course of self-denial by transferring the Coal Purdonium from the chair which he usually kept by his desk so that he could replenish the fire without rising, to the couch; and when he found it still offended his eyes, transplanting it to the bureau, pushing the bottles, papers and cigars therein into a still more unsightly heap to make room.

In due course Gladys Lushington arrived and speedily fulfilled the Sage's worst fears as regards "clearing up."

He had intended to put his foot down on any attempts to tidy his study, even going to the extent of rehearsing a little speech which was to run:

"Now, my dear child, work out your destiny as a woman so far as every other room in the house is concerned, but spare this one."

This is what he intended to say, but when she walked in one day with a duster and a liberal supply of labels which she promptly affixed to the drawers of his writing desk, placing each separate article in its proper place, he sat by meekly without uttering a word. In fact he caught himself watching her pretty imperious movements with admiring eyes.

It was Gladys Lushington's prerogative to rule everybody with whom she came into contact, and the strange part of it was that, unlike most rulers, one seemed to like her the better when one came under her subjugation.

She was that strange anomaly—a loveable tyrant. Capable of subduing anything—even a medical student, which latter is considered the toughest piece of work tyrants, no matter of what gender, can lay themselves out to accomplish.

Only once did the Sage approach rebellion; that was when she bought a waste-paper basket and placed it under his desk with the idea that he should put it to the use for which such a necessary article is intended. Mr. Welford turned it upside down and found it made a most excellent foot-rest. When she came in later in the day she found the usual litter which had grated upon her orderly soul.

The Sage left his seat as she entered and took up a strategical position in front of the fire.

An Englishman always assumes that situation when he is going to assert his right to do as he likes in his own house.

Incipient insubordination sparkled in his eyes; a flood of rhetoric regarding the demon of clearing-up, trembled on his lips, yet the storm never broke.

For with womanly intuition she read the signs, and like a wise reformer declined to argue when she could act.

With not the ghost of a sign that it was anything out of the ordinary she sank on her knees, turned the waste-paper basket the right way up and started to reduce the chaos to order.

He stood it for two minutes, and then positively vacated the vantage-ground afforded by the fire, and kneeling down by her side assisted in his own final enthralment.

It was about this time that the Sage found that the elder students frequently had knotty problems which required solving during the evenings. With profuse apologies for troubling him out of University hours they presented themselves and their tangles at his house, enduring with praiseworthy patience his long explanations (wily youths) providing they could sit and watch Gladys reading or working. Then sometimes the Sage would ask them to remain to supper, which sent them into the "seventh heaven of delight," because it meant listening to her music or engaging her in a contest at chess, in which they made absurd moves which laid them open to scholar's mate several times in succession.

They were quite sure the Sage did not suspect the real cause underlying their assiduous desire for knowledge.

It is one of the phases of love that a man or woman who is in that condition always thinks his or her complaint is securely hidden from the outside world, whereas the disease always gives most unmistakable outward signs to onlookers. Perhaps in this case the Sage—being as his *nom-de-plume* implies a very wise man—might not have guessed, had not the iron entered his own soul.

After having bade his visitors good-night he would retire to his own room, and taking her portrait from the

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place of honour which it occupied, pour out words of passionate love. You see his heart was younger by very many years than his actual age warranted. Yet never in his wildest dreams did he think of ever asking her to link her young life to his. The feelings involved were too reverential. It would have seemed a sacrilege to have conveyed by word or look the slightest inkling of his real feelings. He was quite content to worship her in secret with no desire that she should give him anything beyond calm friendship.

To the world there was no apparent change in him. He was still the staid, methodical scholar, who looked so many years older than he really was; yet for one hour out of the twenty-four he was a gallant young buck brimful of life, loving a fayre ladye; willing to do battle for a mere glance of approval from her bright eyes; or to lay down his life in her service.

He came to live for that one hour, and although he did some very silly things I cannot sneer at him. I can even forgive him for making a surreptitious visit to a strange tailor to have some garments made in the style affected by modern youth; for they were only to wear during that precious hour to add to the illusion. He even bought a raven hair-dye, but, am glad to say, never used it.

But enough—a man's first love for a woman is sacred even though he be forty-five, and older for his years.

He had to take a good deal of punishment one way and another.

Four times in one week he was led apart from his fellows by as many young men in single numbers, who confided to him, with a great air of mystery, that they were madly in love with his ward; and begged him to try and find out if there were the slightest hope for them.

They were one and all inwardly surprised at the amount of sympathy which he displayed, and little guessed the effort of disinterestedness which he had to summon up to bid them try their fate.

No doubt they all did, but as he heard nothing more from them it is safe to assume that from their point of view, no good result came.

Of course, according to all the recognised canons of love stories, Gladys should have overlooked his grey hairs and wrinkles, and fallen in love with him.

But the regrettable fact remains that she did not.

One day some bolder lover—or shall we say, one more sure of his ground—than the preceding four, put his fortunes to the test without going through the preliminary of first asking the Sage's opinion.

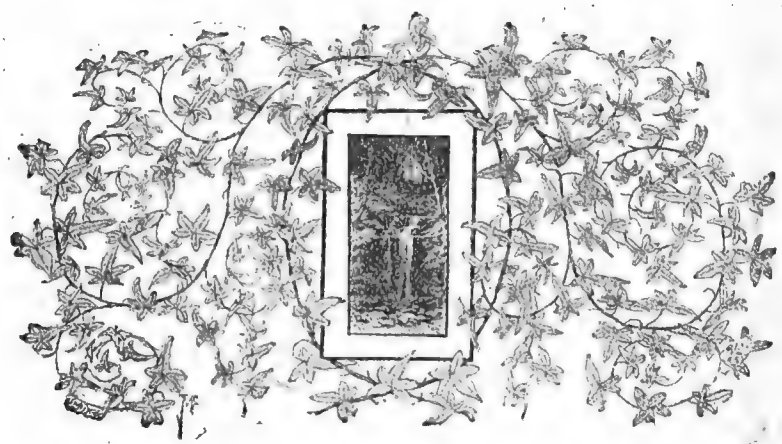
He knew what it meant when they came to him hand in hand, and mustered up sufficient courage to wish them every good fortune and to promise his good offices with the respective parents. There was not a tremour in his voice. But he nearly broke down when she bent over to kiss him, and whispered:

"Thank you so much—I love him so——".

There was no playing at being young by the Sage that night.

Even illusions deliberately conjured up by one's-self, have their limitations.

Martin-Harry.



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The Medallion.

THE patient's lips moved, but no words were audible. The trained nurse glided to the side of the bed and bent over the sick woman.

Once more the white lips moved and the nurse caught the words:

"Something—to drink."

"Yes," said the nurse softly. "I will get you something warm. I will not be long."

The nurse went swiftly into an adjoining room, where she expected to find all that she required; but to her sur rise and annoyance she discovered that the servants had not done their duty, and that it would be necessary for her either to arouse one, or to go downstairs herself.

She reflected that it would take longer to get a maid down to the room and fetch what was required than to do the work herself, and she decided that as she knew the house well she would go into the kitchen and prepare the beverage without troubling any one of the household.

As she knew the house well! Ah, no one suspected how well she knew it and the memories that it awakened within her!

As she made her way into the passage and down the wide staircase into the servants' quarters, her mind went back to the happiness of the old days and the bitterness of the years that followed the time when she left the house. It was the irony of fate that she should return to it, even temporarily, in her present capacity.

Absorbed in these thoughts she had reached the kitchen without being aware of it and had come to a standstill before a gas stove. Her inactivity brought her back to herself with a start and she set about preparing the drink for her patient. But again her mind wandered backwards.

It was in this kitchen many years ago, soon after her marriage, that Fred and she had tried to cook something for supper on their return from the theatre late one night.

It was a foolish idea, people would have said, to steal into the kitchen and endeavour to cook an omelette, when they might have had supper before returning; but the notion had pleased them and with almost child-like glee they had carried it out.

They had made rather a hash of it, as she remembered—with tenderness, and almost with a smile, in spite of the misery of after years. She had cut her thumb in an attempt to chop a little parsley with a big knife, which had delayed the culinary operations, Fred had carefully bound up the injured thumb with a strip from his own handkerchief, and after a little comfort and consolation administered by him, they had finished the cooking of the supper and had partaken of it with great relish.

She stood listlessly gazing vacantly towards the other end of the kitchen while the beverage was warming on the stove. She came slowly back to herself again, wondering who was approaching. Yes there were steps somewhere, she could hardly tell whether the sound came from within or without. It was someone passing in the front, she told herself, and poured out the refreshing drink, and noting with some annoyance that she had allowed it to become much too hot. She must not allow her thoughts to interfere with her duties.

Hark! Someone was certainly approaching and she was now sure that the sound came from the back of the house. Footsteps were sounding quite close to the kitchen window, and she remembered for the first time that she had not lighted the gas, but had found her way in the dark. There was consequently nothing to show the new-comer that the room was occupied, especially now that she had turned off the gas from the stove.

With her usual soft step she made her way towards the window; she was neither more nor less courageous than the ordinary woman, but she was impelled by curiosity. Who could be coming and why?

The answer came in a form quite unexpected; she saw a dark shadow close to the window and heard someone

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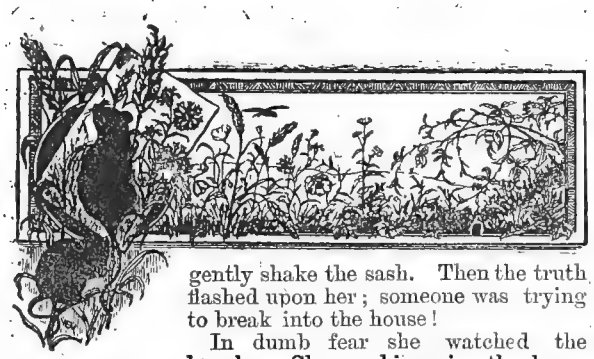

gently shake the sash. Then the truth flashed upon her; someone was trying to break into the house!

In dumb fear she watched the burglar. She saw him raise the lower half of the frame and cautiously step into the kitchen. She shrank involuntarily into a corner while the man turned the slide of his dark lantern and peered cautiously about him.

He wore a cap pulled down over his forehead and a wrap about his throat and the lower part of his face, so that it would have been almost impossible to see his features in the light, but in the obscurity this attempt at disguise was superfluous.

What was she to do? If she cried aloud for help the man would probably kill her, yet she could scarcely allow him to work his will without making an effort to save the property.

Her doubts were solved for her by the man himself, for at that moment he turned the light of his lantern full upon her and, with an exclamation of mingled surprise, fear and annoyance, grasped her by the throat.

"Don't breathe a word!" he said savagely.

This admonition was unnecessary, as the nurse was not able to speak with that strong hand gripping her throat.

"I want the jewels," continued the burglar in a fierce whisper.

"All right!" he continued in a kind of angry aside and in answer to a voice which made itself heard from without.

"You know where they are?" he said, again addressing the frightened woman and in a tone which implied that she did know.

"I think so," answered the woman.

The man had somewhat relaxed his grip in order to let her speak.

"Why are you fooling about in there?" came from the man outside. "Hurry up, will you!"

"They are kept in the lady's room, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"Then you get them," commanded the burglar. "Wait a bit, I'm coming with you to the door so that you don't play any tricks. And if you raise your voice, I'll——I know the plan of this house well enough, so I can tell if you attempt to lead me astray."

She thought of resisting, but of what avail would it be against this man? And if she led him to the door of the sick room and took advantage of her liberty when in the room in order to raise the alarm, the shock to her patient in her present condition would in all probability be fatal.

In drawing away his hand to allow her to precede him, the man caught his finger in a thin gold chain which the nurse invariably wore round her neck and broke it. Something fell to the ground with a metallic jingle.

"Give that to me!" cried the woman as the burglar stooped to pick up the object. "It is of no value in itself; it is mine and not worth taking. I value it because it is——"

The man pushed her aside with one hand while he placed his lantern on the floor, picked up the object and the lantern with one and the same hand, and then told the nurse to go forward.

"Give it to me!" she cried again, but without attempting to make any effort to recover her treasure.

Seeing that she remained passive, the man passed the object into his free hand and gazed at it. He saw a medallion, the picture of a very pretty child; the eyes seemed to look up into his with sweet trustfulness and he stared at the innocent face in wonderment.

"Who is this?" he asked at length. "Whose child is this?"

His voice had changed somewhat and become gentler. She noticed it and breathed more freely; she knew that a child's innocence had many times effected a mora change in a bad man, and she was hoping that this unexpected incident would be the means of saving her patient from robbery and herself from injury or the performance of a repugnant task.

"That is the portrait of my daughter when she was a child. It is Dora's portrait," she replied. "You will give it back to me now, won't you?"

"Your's!"

The man turned the light of the lantern directly upon her face and she felt as though his eyes were searching her through and through.

"Your's!"

He continued to gaze at her searchingly for a few seconds longer; then he placed the lantern on a table with a deep drawn sigh and handed the medallion to her.

"Yes, I recognise you now, Mary," he continued almost wearily. "Time and a change of dress, and the fact that I never expected to meet you again—especially in this house and in such circumstances, prevented me from recognising you at first. Just as you do not know me. And that is our daughter! Where is she?"

Our daughter! This was the husband who had left her many years before, left her to struggle on alone and earn a livehood for herself and the little one, and bring up the child in a way that would make a good woman of her. He had been a weak man and had been led astray by stronger minded "friends" who had fleeced him at the gaming table and induced him to speculate in bogus concerns established by themselves.

He had kept it from her until he could do so no longer—until the day before the crash came; and when, in her grief and anxiety for the welfare of Dora, she had given way to her feelings and had reproached him for his doings, he had left her and she had never seen him since. And now they met again in the old house, and he in a capacity that proved he had gone from bad to worse.

She did not reel or swoon, she felt no trace of weakness at this unexpected meeting and discovery; on the contrary, she stood before him more firmly and more erect than ever. Outside, the man who was waiting and keeping watch, uttered some hoarse menaces mingled with oaths; he could not understand his companion's conduct.

"Why don't you go on, you idiot?" he cried in a low tone. And this question was followed by others couched in less polite terms, all of which were unheeded by the two people in the kitchen.

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"How it all comes back!" said the burglar musingly, as he looked round the kitchen. "Do you remember that night, Mary, when we came home late and cooked an omelette? It was over there that you cut your thumb. And the happy time we had just before that—when we spent a month in Switzerland! Dora must be a woman by this time; where is she?"

His voice was changed, his whole manner was different; the coarse tone and bearing of the housebreaker were gone and there was a return to the gentleman of former days.

"She is at a boarding school, finishing her education; she gained a scholarship."

The words came from her in a clear, firm tone, a tone that was almost hard.

The man shrank from her; he realised the gulf which he had placed between them.

He remembered his own weakness and guilty career since he had so basely deserted her, and he was able to conceive the strength and purity of the woman who stood so erect before him.

He could imagine dimly the effort that must have been required for Mary, brought up as a lady, to earn a living for herself and her child—to undertake the work which should have fallen upon him. How could he expect her to be otherwise than hard.

"Are you going now?" Mary asked him calmly. "Or do you intend to continue your iniquitous work? If so spare me the horror of assisting you. But I warn you that if you enter the bedroom, you will be responsible for the death of a human being. Do not add that to your other crimes."

He hesitated and then answered her almost pleadingly.

"I will go now, Mary. But before I go I want you to grant one request. I want you to think a little more kindly of me in the future and to teach Dora to do the same. Tell her that I am dead—anything, so that she does not hate me. Perhaps one day I may see her, and may be more worthy to see her. And if that time should ever come, I should like to feel that she did not loathe me. Will you promise that?"

"She believes that you are dead. I have never told her anything that would lead her to suspect the truth. She has your portrait and in her innocence she loves you. But I trust from the bottom of my heart that you will never meet, for then her image will be cast down and broken."

"Good-bye, Mary!"

The man's head fell upon his chest: he picked up his lantern and made his way out through the window, which he shut quietly after him. Mary went to the other end of the kitchen for the drink which she had prepared and hurried upstairs to her patient.

"You have been gone such a time!" murmured the patient querulously.

"I am sorry, madam," returned the nurse, "but the delay was unavoidable."

Outside the house an altercation had taken place and the two men moved off quarrelling fiercely. In the morning, a man was found lying dead, stabbed to the heart, about half a mile away. Nurse Mary, who read a description of the murdered man in the newspaper, knew who that man was and shed a few bitter tears over a wasted life.

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Fill in the stars (one letter for each star) to represent six well advertised articles. Write those you find out on a sheet of paper, placing the respective number to each, and post it, together with your order for a double packet of LEMONELLE, a P.O. or stamps for 1/3, enclosing a stamped addressed reply envelope for result, &c., to Miss EDITH CROSSLEY, 28 CITY ROAD, LONDON, E.C. *The Prizes will be awarded in order of correctness, and in case of equality will be added together and divided.*

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WANTED—A COOK.

When Kitty told us that the baker would wait no longer, and that this time she really must go, there was great grief amongst us. She had been with us for years. She loved us all, knew all our tastes, our secrets, and our tempers.

The baker had been patient, and now that his new shop was all ready, and the business paid for, the tidy room behind well stocked with horsehair suite, oleographs, a duchesse pair, plenty of pampas grass, and other luxuries, we had not the heart to persuade Kitty to remain longer with us.

The children said the new cook must be able to swing high, make toffy, and cut out boy doll's trousers.

My sister wished, if possible, to avoid advertising, so she went, I with her, to a registry office.

We found plenty of waiting mistresses. Of domestics there was a dearth. Cooks were at a premium, "generals" almost an unknown quantity, and housemaids rare.

At last we were told we might speak to Maud Smith. We rose, and followed by the envious glances of those around us, went into another room. Maud Smith was fine-looking. We bowed respectfully to her; she somewhat haughtily returned our salute.

"What wages do you give?" she began.

"Fourteen shillings a week," said my sister, "and no washing."

"Oh, I would not go where there was washing," said Maud. "How many children?"

"Five," said my sister guiltily.

"Well, I don't like going where there is a lot of children. I don't mind a couple."

In an undertone I offered to drown three of Mary's treasures for a consideration, while Maud continued:

"How many nights a week out?"

"One, and every second Sunday."

"I don't mind trying it; but I must always get Monday evenings off to attend a local society I belong to, whatever happens."

It dawned on us that we had asked this damsel none of the questions we had come armed with.

"But can you cook?" Mary said.

"Oh, yes," was the reply; "I can cook everything."

"Have you any references to that effect?" said my sister bravely. "I should like to see some."

"Well," said Maud Smith in a really offended tone, "I am not used to being asked for references. I would not demean myself by asking for any. All my mistresses cry when I leave them, and there are two now wanting me back, if I just hold up my little finger."

"Surely there is someone I could ask about you, just for form's sake," said Mary.

"Oh, there is plenty if I cared to name them. I'll think it over, and give you an answer to-morrow. I fancy your place is a bit too far out to please me."

We found ourselves dismissed. The registry office manageress seemed annoyed when we told her something of the interview. "She has a queer temper," she said, "and won't stand being interfered with, but she is a good cook, and it is a pity you bothered about references; they don't like it."

We saw a few others. One old Irish lady was very anxious to come to us. "You are both so ladylike, my dears," she said.

She wasn't a cook at all, but a charwoman. She said she would like a change after fifteen years of charring, and fancied she would have a nice comfortable home with us.

"You could come and teach me iverything lovely," she said to me. "I'd niver object to havin' you in my kitchen as them professionals cooks would."

We called at another office. The manageress said she had just the person to suit us, and showing us into a room, we found in front of us——

Maud Smith! Now she would have none of us. We went through the performance of interviewing two or three domestics.

None were suitable. One said she could cook beautifully—little dishes, entrées, savouries, everything, in fact. When we began to specify these she became somewhat confused. How did she cook a curry? Well, some people liked it one way, some another. She was not very particular. Savouries she took to be our bad pronunciation of saveloys, and said you got them best from the man with the hand cart in the street. When asked if she could make Welsh rarebit, she smiled serenely, and said:

"Oh, yes, and hare, too, grand."

Another registry office. No one was there except the usual array of domesticless mistresses. There was a good name on the books, we were told; one that would really suit—Maud Smith.

We went home and advertised. We had a great many applicants. Dressmakers came and washerwomen. One lady nurse tried hard to persuade us to take her, saying she would be so useful in a case of emergency. One poor mad lady said she would tell us candidly she had been in a lunatic asylum for a short time. She was gentle and tired, and said if we saw her getting at all "queer" we could ring up the police. When we rejected her offer she cried, and said her last hope was gone, and what did we propose doing for her.

At last we engaged one. Her references were good, but all lacked something. None reported her to be "sober." Was the omission intentional? we wondered. By this time we knew our places better than to make too many inquiries; we decided that we must just trust to luck and a good key to the cellar. She was to have come last night. Her name was Gertrude. She objected to being called "cook" emphatically. She also objected to wearing caps. She evidently objected to us finally, for although Mary and I sat up for her until past twelve o'clock, she never came. All her mistresses, according to her accounts, seem to have been possessed of very intemperate habits, and forgot things, and had to be put to bed in an incapable state by Gertrude; possibly some of these habits had been infectious.

Mary is opposite to me now, nearly weeping.

"What shall I do, Winifred?" she says, "Shall I take Violet Roseworthy, and let her have 'her boy' in the kitchen on his nights out, and teach her everything, or I shall write and implore Maud Smith to honour us."

This from my haughty sister, who a few days back was a strict disciplinarian, rigid in her rules, and particular to a degree.

"Poison the baker," I say.

Esther.

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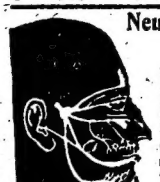

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The annexed cut presents in the prominent white lines the nerves most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. Sufferers will know only too well the pain tracks, and will be glad to know of a Simple and Sure Remedy. The proprietors will send Free two sample ZOX Powders to any reader of *Short Stories* sending stamped envelope to ZOX CO., 11 HATTON GARDEN, LONDON, E.C.

TOO STOUT.

I was for years; by chance I came across a simple home remedy that reduced me from 17st. to 10st. 12lbs., and I will willingly send particulars **free** to any sufferer enclosing stamp. Mrs. L. E. FELL, 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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MACHINES. LEES RAY. S. S. Dept., South Castle St., Liverpool, is a specialist on Ugly and Red Noses. Send stamp for particulars of his patent scientific Nose Improvers. Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Outstanding Ear Machines 11/6.

IMPORTANT TO WEAK MEN

And those suffering from nervous exhaustion, loss of vigour, Varicocele, &c., can be successfully and permanently cured without operation or detention from business by THE DR. COLLINS most improved and rational method medical science has ever yet produced.

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CARE OF THE SKIN.

We wish to urge on all readers of this paper the extreme importance of having a healthy skin. If the pores are clogged, whether by the neglect of the ordinary rules of health, or by some skin disease, ill-health is sure to result. Apart from the unsightly appearance of an ever-present rash, the intolerable itching causes broken rest, and a variety of unpleasant symptoms.

ECZEMA.

The chief Skin Trouble to which the skin is liable is known as Eczema, which is merely a light-sounding name for a cold or catarrh affecting the skin. If Eczema is acute the part affected is red and hot, and burns and weeps. If it is a chronic variety, the surface is dry, often scaly, and there is great skin irritation.

Mr. Geo. C. Fellowes Simmons, of R.N.T. College, Devonport, writes: "The cure affected by your 'Antexema' was such that it has given me perfect faith in your remedy, and I am now taking your Blood Granules, which I only hope and believe will cure me internally as your 'Antexema' has cured the external eruption."

ECZEMA OF THE LEGS.

Simple eczema of the legs is quickly removed by means of the "Antexema" treatment. For particulars see Page 11 of our Booklet.

Mrs. E. Cuffin, of 10 Grove Street, Bedford Street, Leicester, writes: "I thank God and you for the relief I have got from your 'Antexema.' For two years I have suffered great pain in my legs. About two months ago they began to be rough and inflamed. Seeing your advt., I sent for a free sample, which I received from you the following day. By the time I had used the sample bottle of 'Antexema' my legs were healed."

INFANTILE ECZEMA.

Eczema affecting children is frequently caused by the use of strong soaps, and by wearing underclothing from which the soap or soda has been imperfectly removed. Fevers, teething, and a diet containing too much sugar are also said to be frequent causes.

Mr. Richard Bell, of 13 Spring Gardens, Hawthorne Avenue, Hull, writes: "Some seven weeks ago two of my children were attacked with infantile eczema. I was recommended to write for a sample of your 'Antexema,' which was quickly sent. I purchased a further supply, and in less than a fortnight my children were quite cured of the eczema."

ECZEMA OF THE HANDS.

With a little care it is not difficult to have nice hands. Do not wet them more than is absolutely necessary, and do not use strong acrid soaps. People who use their hands freely, as in nearly every trade, and especially those engaged in laundry work, always suffer more or less from hand troubles. "Antexema" is an excellent remedy for any form of eczema caused by the action of irritants, and it is an equally necessary household requisite to keep the skin in good condition, when red, rough, and dirty-looking.

Mrs. A. Chapman, of Riby, near Stallingboro', Lincs., writes: "'Antexema' is a wonderful specific for eczema. I had it in my hands, and after using a bottle of your 'Antexema' it disappeared."

Miss R. P. Dovey, of 234 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, writes: "'Antexema' is so good that she will always keep it for toilet use. She hopes this testimony will bring you many customers."

TEST IT FREE OF CHARGE.

Should you wish to test "Antexema," all that is necessary is to write to the Antexema Co., 83 Castle Road, London, N.W., naming this paper, and enclosing one stamp to defray postage, and receive a Free Trial Sample, together with a valuable booklet on the Skin, by return of post.

USE "ANTEXEMA."

"Antexema" is sold in bottles by Chemists and Stores at 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d., or post free for 1s. 3d. and 2s. 9d. from the Antexema Company, 83 Castle Road, London, N.W.

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THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

This week we present a new form of competition to our readers. In this competition a prize of £2 will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

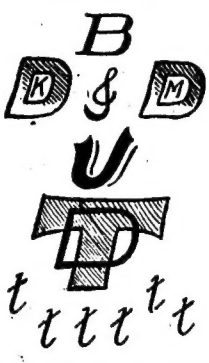
Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, July 2nd, 1900.

EACH OF THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS A SENTENCE.

What are they?

No. 148.

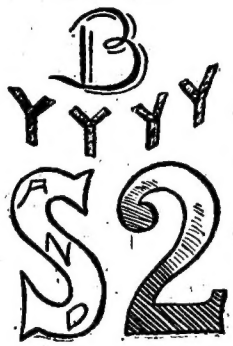
No. 149.



No. 150.

No. 151.

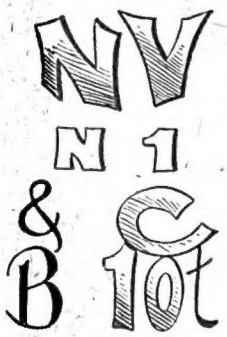
No. 152.



No. 153.

No. 154.

No. 155.



RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

Nos. 124 to 129.

The prize of £2 has been awarded to Mrs. Wildmore, 2 Albert Street, Worksop, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "The Incidental Bishop," by Grant Allen, has been sent to:

Mrs. J. J. Hogg, Manila House, 167 Kensington Avenue, East Ham.
Dr. A. Spearing, Patricroft, Lancs.
F. J. Buckley, 9 Grove Terrace, Grove Lane, Handsworth, Staffs.
R. D. Watt, Knocklandside, Kilmaurs, N.B.
A. Watkinson, Factory Lane, Doncaster.
T. H. Wright, 59 William Edward Street, Birmingham.
W. Robertson, 7A North Woodside Road, Glasgow.
Miss L. Saunders, 149 Tulse Hill, S.W.
Charles Vernon, Gwenholm, Castle Road, North Finchley.
Miss L. Wilkinson, Parkside, Greenbank, Plymouth.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

Nos. 130 to 135.

No. 130. CHELMSFORD.
No. 131. Rats live underground.
No. 132. Two heads are better than one.
No. 133.

H E A R
E A S E
A S P S
R E S T

No. 134. PATIENCE.
No. 135. CLUB-LAW.

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Our Gift Watch is a genuine non-magnetic Keyless Lever. Jewelled movement, thoroughly strong, and a perfect timekeeper, and will last a life-time; all the parts well finished. There are thousands of workmen employed on electric railways, in chemical works, in electric light central stations, &c., who are without watches, knowing that anti-magnetic watches are costly. Our Gift Watch, being unaffected by magnetism or temperature, meets this want. We send with each Watch a written warranty for 3 years.

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FREE TO ALL APPLICANTS

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Three Tints: BLANCHE, NATURELLE, & RACHEL.
Of all Chemists, Hairdressers, Stores, etc.

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To ANYONE HAVING THE LEAST DIFFICULTY, it will be sent post free for 12 Stamps by "KAPUTINE Ltd.," Huddersfield; or, on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope, A. M. Kaputine, Huddersfield, you will receive a free sample.

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£3,350 IN CASH PRIZES

A FEW OF THE PRINCIPAL PRIZE-WINNERS LAST TIME WERE:

£100 IN CASH. WILLIAM SILL, 12 Winstanley Place, Bouston, near Kendal, Westmoreland.
£30 IN CASH. VALENTINE CAMBRILL, Monks Horton, Kent.
£15 IN CASH. OWEN OWENS, Maldwyn Stores, Llandegfan, Menai Bridge.
£10 IN CASH. H. L'ESTRANGE BURGESS, Bayham House, Sevenoaks.

In the first place make up the best sentence you can out of eight words, each word commencing with a letter of **"PRETORIA."** Thus, for example: "Prosperity Reaches Even Transvaal; Our Rule Is Admirable." You can cut out and use the following form if you like.

Be sure and mark envelope, left-hand top corner, "Short Stories," and forward to A.B. Cycle Co. Limited, 59, 60, 67, 68 & 69 Chancery Lane, Holborn.

Competition closes on Saturday, June 30th, 1900.

I*_____ of† _____

hereby declare that the sentence below is the only one I have sent in for this competition, and that it is my own unaided work.

P	R	E	T
O	R	I	A

Don't forget to enclose two penny stamps.

Date of posting_____

* State whether Mr., Mrs., or Miss. † Full address to ensure result reaching you.

We will give you full details of the above cash prizes, in which there is nothing to pay for any prize, and where every competitor is a Cash Prize-Winner, when we send you the results of this Competition, in which for the best solution we offer:

A £23 A.B. CYCLE FREE,

AND FURTHER PRIZES OF

2nd Class Prizes	...	**£23 Cycle for £9**	**5th Class Prizes**	...	**£23 Cycle for £12**
3rd Class Prizes	...	**£23 Cycle for £10**	**6th Class Prizes**	...	**£23 Cycle for £13**
4th Class Prizes	...	**£23 Cycle for £11**	**Consolation Prizes**	...	**£23 Cycle for £14**

49 Cycles have been won Free of Cost.

FULL NAMES AND ADDRESSES CAN BE HAD ON APPLICATION.

TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.—Competition is NOW OPEN, and CLOSES on Saturday, June 30th, 1900.

Enclose two penny stamps for postage of Result of Competition. As so few are able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount paid for any prize if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. Results will be declared as soon as possible. Prizes unclaimed in a week or ten days are forfeited.

£100 **If you can purchase our cheapest machine, brand new, from us, or an agent, dealer, shipper, or factor can buy one for less than FIFTEEN SOVEREIGNS, we will promptly hand you a £100 BANK OF ENGLAND NOTE.**

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